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# HOW SOLDIERS FIGHT

AN ATTEMPT TO DEPICT FOR THE POPULAR UNDERSTANDING THE WAGING OF WAR AND THE SOLDIER'S SHARE IN IT

BY
F. NORREYS CONNELL

WITH 24 ILLUSTRATIONS BY R. CATON WOODVILLE
STANLEY L. WOOD, W. H. OVEREND, AND OTHERS

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To

"GUNNER JINGO"

AND TO

ALL STRONG MEN

# Foreword

THE Author is far too conscious of the immensity of his subject, and the limits of his own capacity, to doubt that many, and it may be great, errors lie, hidden from him alone, in these pages. His mainstay is the hope that these failures will prove to be rather in the detail than the general effect of the pictures he has drawn.

The Author can tell the Professional Soldier nothing, unless, indeed, he may suggest to the young Infantry man thoughts on Artillery fire, and to the fledgling Gunner a reflection on Cavalry action.

This book is mainly addressed to the

Volunteers and to the classes from which the Volunteers come. The Author is very well aware of the difficulties under which these good fellows labour while carrying their self-imposed burden. But he would remind them that strong men should never relinquish a duty once accepted, and that however great be the temptation to turn amateur soldiering into pic-nic-ing, to do so is to betray a most honourable trust and to break their noble promise of serving their country, without compulsion and without reward.

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## CHAPTER I

# As they did it of Old Time

THE first soldiers fought with their teeth and claws; they had no artillery nor military equipment of even the roughest type, yet their scuffles were probably conducted with some science—say of such a kind as hunting-dogs show now.

Then the primitive soldier found that he could hurt his enemy worse when he used a hard substance instead of his naked hand, and he took the silex stone or flint and fashioned it to this purpose. Then came the axe, a mere sharpened stone gripped in the fingers, the first weapon of palæolithic chivalry. Then the axe was given a shaft, that is to say, the wood was split and the shaped stone inserted in it and bound tightly with fibre. On a similar plan our forefathers

made arrows, or rather javelins, for the bow was a later invention.

The "Stone Period" is the suggestive name by which the remotest antiquity is designated, yet stone weapons were in common use among the Normans as late as the eighth century of the Christian era, and stone-tipped arrows were shot at Mr. Stanley when he went to rescue Emin Pasha.

The Stone faded into the Bronze age with the dawn of civilization, and the rise of the Assyrian Empire. The Assyrian arms, as all their metal implements, were made from an alloy of copper, zinc, and tin, and were the sword, club, lance, and helm. They used also bows and arrows (presumably bronze), and military carriages, of which the most remarkable was a huge chariot protected in front, and filled with soldiers, who, on being driven up to the enemy's gates, pushed out a formidable pike through an interstice left for it, and sought to break an entrance. The Homeric wars were waged with weapons such as these. Goliath's armour was of brass, and Plutarch records the finding of a bronze spear head in the tomb of Theseus.



A HEBREW WARRIOR
B.C. 800 . . . .

The Assyrians also used fire for siege purposes, but only in the primitive form of combustible material attached to spears and javelins, and thus thrown, or more likely thrust, at the enemy's defences.

The Homeric Greeks were acquainted with the value of iron, but not with good means of working it, so that it was only used for such simple forms as arrow heads: the Greek bow was of horn, as were those of the Moslems many centuries later.

On the field of battle in the heroic ages the bowman was not kindly looked upon. Paris was the best archer among the Trojans, but Homer does not represent his art in a favourable light; the "Godlike Pandarus" is more sympathetically handled (albeit hardly allowed to rub elbows with Hector and Æneas); but he only uses the bow at critical moments, as when Diomedes is making hopeless havoc of the Trojan forces. The tactics of the Homeric Greeks were hardly more dignified than the trickeries of schoolboys. Battles were begun by mutual abuse between leaders whose aim was so to wound each other with insults that an incautious

movement of the shield might accompany the choleric answer.

The phalanx is mentioned in the Iliad, but its tactical value is not apparent as having effected issues of any consequence. Later, however, it became the typical formation of the Greeks, and so they made their battle order at Marathon.

The hoplite, who may be considered as equivalent to the mediæval man-at-arms, was the heavily equipped soldier, and of hoplites only was the phalanx composed; the lighter infantry, armed with missile weapons, such as the bow and catapult, being used as skirmishers; as riflemen, *Jäger*, or *tirailleurs*, have been handled in modern times. The hoplite carried a sword, but his real weapon was the sarisse, or long pike, which he held in both hands, much as one holds a musket with bayonet fixed.

Formed in phalanx, the hoplites stood shoulder to shoulder, firmly pressed together, and sixteen deep. So arrayed, their long spears projected some sixteen feet in front for the first rank, thirteen for the second, ten for the third, and so on till the sixth

rank; behind the sixth rank, Polybius tells us, the sarisses were pointed upwards, and served as some protection against projectiles, breaking their flight and force.

The phalanx was thus a living *chevaux de frise*, with the solid backing of a rock and on ground suitable to its manœuvres virtually impossible to break. But if invulnerable at the stand and irresistible in motion, this motion was inordinately slow and unwieldy, as Pyrrhus was compelled to recognise when he invaded Italy in the year B.C. 280. The Greek phalanx opposed to the Roman legions was as a ten-knot battle-ship to twenty knot cruisers. The cruisers cannot give blow for blow against the big man-o'-war with any hope of success, but they can easily elude and constantly harass her. The Roman legions could not face the phalanx and fight it knee to knee, but they could cut off its supplies and threaten it constantly so as to exhaust it. If the legions dared not charge the phalanx, the phalanx dared not break ranks or make any incautious movements in the presence of the legions.

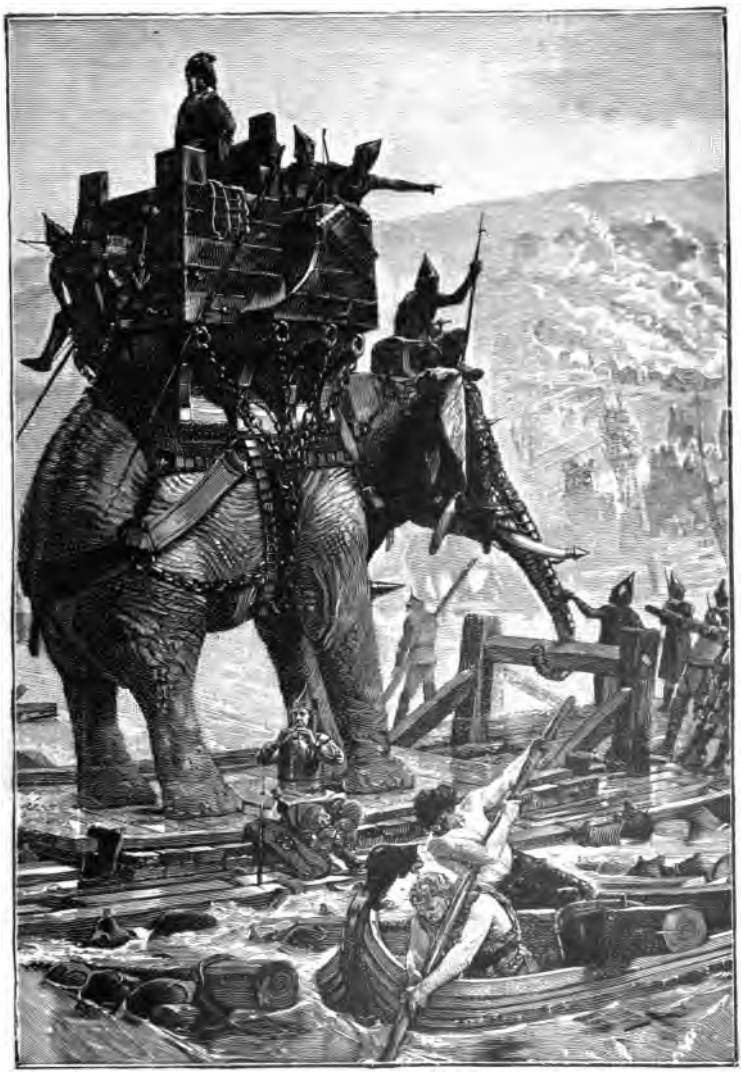
And in the sequel the phalanx fell before

the legion; Greece bowed down to Rome, and yielded to her the civilization she had won from the East.

Meanwhile the age of iron had commenced. About the fifth century before Christ the harder metal began to supplant its elder and more beautiful brother. Still, when the Gauls invaded Italy in B.C. 223 they fought successfully with brazen swords against the Roman iron, and it was not until they had discarded their brass weapons and taken iron ones that they began to give way before the Romans; the reason for this being that, lacking the science to temper iron, their false blades would bend and give when crashed against the Roman steel.

Only last year, at Omdurman, a lancer officer's sword doubled against the shield of an Emir, precisely as, we may suppose, the Gallic swords bent on the Roman ægis; but, for all that, iron in the form of steel is, and will probably remain for many a day to come, the metal of war, whether shaped as sword-bayonet at the end of a rifle, or the wire reinforce of a 60-ton gun.

Not until the time of Charlemagne did



ROMAN SOLDIERS CROSSING
A RIVER ON RAFTS . . .

horsemen assume the masterful rôle in battle which they held throughout the Middle Ages. They had already been used in war for over a thousand years, notably in the East, and the Roman *equites* or cavaliers were recruited from the aristocracy of the State; but the Franks before the reign of Charlemagne ignored the horse as a military instrument. The great Emperor changed all that; he enlisted in his service more horse than foot. Out of this new system grew the knights or gendarmerie of the Middle Ages, and henceforth for several centuries the cavalry were the only men to be reckoned with on the continental battlefields, the infantry being merely their serfs and retainers bound by the feudal system to attend them in war.

The age of chivalry was an artificial return to the methods and customs of Homeric war. The great men met together just as the ancient heroes, only mounted, and fought their private quarrels, while their rank and file, kerns and gallowglasses looked on, squabbling now and then, but rarely bringing about any event of importance.

When William Duke of Normany landed

in England, he opposed his mail-clad horsemen to the Saxon infantry, and was heavily repulsed so long as they stood on the defensive; but when by artifice he led them on to break their cover to pursue him his galloping horsemen overset them utterly.

Then in the course of time arose that marvellous fellow, the English bowman, and he affected the tactics of chivalry not a little: for, albeit his weapon was as old as the Assyrian Empire, he had brought it both in construction and use to such perfection that not even the knight in armour on his barbed destrier was proof against the feathered shaft.

And then came cannon and murderous saltpetre to complete the changes the deft, strong hands of the archers had inaugurated. Again the man on foot became predominant in war, but now he appeared not as the peasant in arms fighting for his country, but the trained mercenary, who lived by the sword, and owed allegiance to none but his paymaster.

To-day the Swiss are the waiters and hotel-keepers of Europe, at one time they were



A MEDIÆVAL COMBAT.
BATTLEAXE AGAINST
DAGGER . . . . .

the professional fighting men. Other mercenaries well in demand were the Germans, Scots, and Genoese; but the typical freelance alike of song and legend and of historical fact is the "Switzer."

England was very fortunate in being able as a rule to dispense with the services of alien soldiers—at least as the main strength of her army. In France, under the Valois kings, the lower classes were not encouraged to perfect themselves in the arts of war, whereas in England every inducement was offered them to do so, and the wisdom of this training showed itself in the fruits of victory. If two men meet in quarrel, one well equipped and skilled in arms, albeit unmoved by personal sentiment, the other inspired by the noblest feelings but ignorant of the use of the weapon thrust suddenly in his hand, one need not be a cynic to prophesy that virtue will succumb. But let two warriors of equal prowess stand face to face, one fighting for pay, the other for his country or his faith or for even the least comprehensible shibboleth that appeals deeply to his imagination: it is a moral certainty that this latter has more

potential energy than his equal in technique, and is therefore the likelier to win.

A curious point about the disuse of body armour is that long after it had been proven as of little avail against the projectiles of firearms it was still worn as an appurtenance and insignium of gentility or leadership, and its final disappearance was probably as well due to the extravagant costliness of its later forms of ornamentation as to its military inutility. To this day the *Corps d'élite* of the great European nations carry on parade cuirasses and headdresses of a decorative character which would surely be abandoned on the call to take the field.

Modern campaigning may be said to have been initiated by Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden when he became generalissimo of the Protestant forces during the Thirty Years' War. His troops doffed their armour all but the breastplate, and were taught how to manœuvre in various formations; his cavalry were given firearms, and a drill which, although opposed to the best systems, seems to have been of service at the time; and, most wonderful of all, he actually attempted

to organize his artillery and to allot to it a definite end in action instead of leaving it to roll about the field on the wheels of chance. The musket began to push its way into prominence in the seventeenth century, and as its use grew that of the pike diminished. About the middle of the century the bayonet, then a slender, sword-like knife rammed when required into the muzzle of the gun barrel and already used for some time by the hunters of ferocious animals, appeared on the field of battle, and gave the pike its quietus as a practical weapon, although for special purposes the latter survived many a long day afterwards.

The eighteenth century saw musketry established as the chief agent of slaughter under Marlborough; cavalry trained as cavalry should be trained by Frederick the Great; and, finally, artillery developed to the highest tactical power its then *matériel* would permit under Napoleon. During the present century all these arms have been yet better understood; but putting aside their enormous increase in mechanical power, their progress may be considered as running on lines already laid down.

The most remarkable phase in nineteenth-century militarism is the growth of national armies, and the enormous hosts kept always under arms. The mediæval change from the unskilled peasant soldier to the trained mercenary is hardly as important as the modern transition from the mercenary to the drilled citizen soldier.

In a report on the black troops under his command in the Congo Free State, in the year of grace 1899, Major van Gele complains that "the blacks enlisted for service in the Congo Militia are always a source of danger, because they are simply mercenaries without religious, national, or other ties to bind them to their commanders. Their only law is force; and as they are incapable of realizing the existence of power when it is not exercised, they have begun to doubt the strength of the Belgian arms, and to feel some contempt for the Belgians for not exhibiting it at every opportunity. . . . What is the nature of the sanction which could force them to obedience and prevent revolts? In European countries, if the army revolted, the nation itself would rise and fur-

nish resources for the struggle. Here in the Congo State, however, nothing of the kind can happen. The forces of the State, provided as they are with arms superior to those of the people, are masters of the country."

The Congo Free State to-day, avowedly at the grace of its native mercenaries, is neither better nor worse off (waiving the extra savagery supposed to pertain to a coloured skin) than was continental Europe at the time of the religious wars of the seventeenth century, if no later, when *Reiters*, *Cottes Noires*, and *Lansequenets*, regimented Frankensteins, conjured up by the vanity of princes and bishops, were seen by old Daubigné "as a thunderbolt sweeping through France."

## CHAPTER II

# The Soldiers of the Powers

EVEN nowadays the word soldier turns one's mind instinctively towards France; for though she has not been, as Switzerland, a market for professional warriors, that was mainly because her many sons who followed the career of arms found their work cut out for them at home. It was the custom of her sovereigns, when policy forbade a great war, to fight a small one, so that their retainers might not only be kept in good condition, but live at free quarters on the enemy, or such other persons as could not be compelled to keep them in time of peace.

So far indeed was France from supplying the world with soldiers, that up to the time of the revolutionary wars, and probably

later, nearly a third (certainly more than a quarter) of her standing army were Germans, Swiss, Irish, and Italians.

These armies were the personal properties of the king, warriors to win him famous victories over rival monarchs, policemen to repress his mutinous subjects, and very often armed taxgatherers to boot. Naturally his alien soldiers were the best instruments for the latter purposes; but national sentiment was a very secondary consideration in France under the Valois and Bourbon kings, and most soldiers could be relied on to carry out their orders with sufficient stringency anywhere out of the immediate surroundings of their homes.

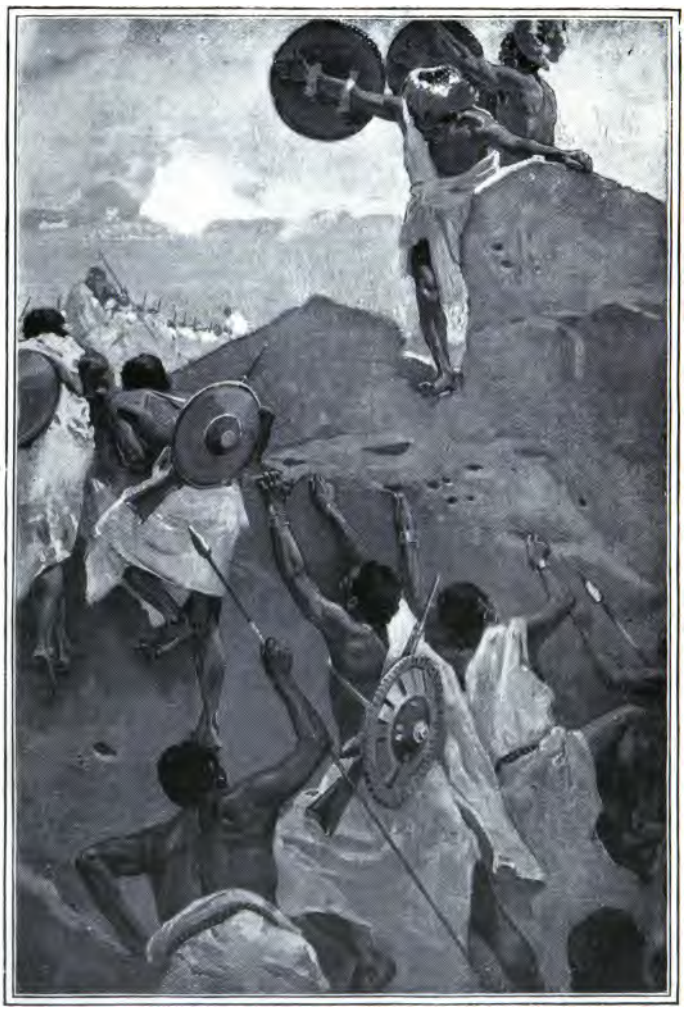
In face of the popular belief that obtains even to this day in France, it may be no harm to reiterate here that the troops which fought best in the young Republic's struggle for life (I am tempted to say the only troops that fought at all) were not those patriotic citizen bands who hastened to the frontier (and back again), but battalions formed of the remnants of the king's old mercenaries, who at least understood the art of standing

still, and did not allow "élan" to carry them anywhere but forwards.

As these veterans gradually wasted away the character of the soldiers of France did not improve. Personal devotion to Napoleon inspired his troops with fanatic courage, but the bulk of the hosts he commanded were not as good as those who went campaigning under Louis XV.

If Saxe had generalled such troops as met Wellington in the later engagements in the peninsula, he would never have been able to give even dull Cumberland his Fontenoy. Discipline was never a very strong point with the Republican and Imperial armies: after Moscow it completely disappeared, and to this day it has never properly come back, although in a few instances glorious examples of it were shown in the earlier days of the war of 1870. That war deprived France not only of her strategical frontier and her strongest fortresses, but—what was a far greater loss—the recruiting ground of her steadiest, and therefore most valuable, soldiers.

The Bretons are, it must be admitted, cool



ABYSSINIANS SCALING THE PRECIPICE OF AMBA ALAGUI TO TAKE THE ITALIANS IN THE REAR—ITALIAN-ABYSSINIAN WAR . .

and reliable fighters, and sound naval gunners, but they are slow-witted, and do not take easily to horses, so that they are not satisfactory artillerymen for land service. France's best artillerists came from Alsace Lorraine; now their place is taken by the Flemish, of the north-west frontier. The southern peoples have never been able to aim cannon correctly when perturbed by hostile fire. Last year the Spanish naval gunners under Cervera came no nearer the mark than the Spanish land gunners under Cuesta ninety years ago. Nor does the Italian army seem to have done well with its seventy guns at Adowa.

Still granting that the charge of unsteadiness is only to be directed against the Latin peoples in general, and has never been proven in this particular case, the French artillerist of our time is not a man to be pooh-poohed, and his officers have not their betters in the world.

The characteristic of the French soldier is the gallantry of his attack, its dash, its fury. In the older wars he would cover the charging ground at incredible pace, and have the

devil still in him when he touched his enemy; he could handle a bayonet with such marvellous dexterity that only overpowering force mote prevail against him, for there was none so quick-handed as he.

As long as he believed himself being led to victory he would march well and bear hardships without a murmur, but at the least crack in his general's fortunes he might fall from him. A French voltigeur charging was well nigh invincible: stop him, and he was beaten; beaten, he would run away, and running away he was almost as hard to stop as when charging. None of the great European armies advanced as well, none broke so badly.

The German soldier has not the dash of the Frenchman: possibly he has less physical courage; he seems to *dare* less. But he is a stronger man alike in body and in mind. If, at the moment when called upon to face death or dismemberment in the field, he wishes himself at home with his wife and children, or guiding his plough, or driving his quill, nevertheless he approaches the enemy with complete determination to injure



THE LAST SORTIE FROM PARIS. FRANCO-GERMAN WAR. PRUSSIANS REPELLING FRENCH INFANTRY . . . . . .

*Reduced from "Battles of the Nineteenth Century." By permission of Cassell & Co., Ltd.* . . . .

him in conformity with the regulations in the drill book. Perhaps the officer who is leading him kicked him a week ago for some blunder, and at the time sheer lack of initiative prevented his emptying his Mauser into him; but now that officer represents for him the vested authority of God, king and fatherland, and he would give his life to protect him. This admirably military state of mind has been inculcated in the German soldier by discipline, not the mere discipline of his three years with the colours, but the habits of discipline which he has acquired almost from the hour of weaning, and with which, if heredity has any meaning, he should have been inoculated by his mother's milk. It is in his discipline that the German soldier's superiority to the Frenchman exists; that he is superior, take him for all in all, I hold to be reasonably proved, although no doubt the arguments are unfinished. Jena is perhaps the greatest blot on the Prussian's military reputation, and at Jena there cannot be denial that he failed badly and fled disgracefully; but if ever defeat could be explained and excused, Jena could. The Prus-

sian staff had retained everything senseless pertaining to the time of the Great Frederick, not one thing wise: the generals were aged pedants, the regimental officers stiff-necked brutes with nothing to recommend them but personal courage, the condition of the rank and file was such as to absolutely preclude the possibility of their possessing self-respect. And, last but not least, Goethe, if a great poet, was a vile commissary. Against them was Napoleon with the ablest lieutenants Europe knew, and an equal number of fighting men flushed with many victories.

Since the last war between them, the Frenchman and the Prussian have been trained on diametrically opposite principles to those hitherto associated with them.

The Frenchman who made his fame by his élan, is taught to fight behind cover and cling to fortifications; the Prussian, whose steadiness is his chiefly observed quality, is told that he must go always forward.

It would be foolhardy to declare one system absolutely good and the other absolutely bad, but it is easy to judge which is more warlike.

The third great world soldier is the Russian. There is none braver than he, there is none steadier, there is none who will suffer more from his superiors without reproach, and there really appears to be none so completely unintelligent. Of his courage and of his stupidity his enemies, his allies, and his superiors all seem to hold the same opinion.

The British soldier of old time was said not to know when he was beaten. The Russian soldier has been beaten so often that he does not care. Whether he wins or loses he is always ready to fight on till he drops; as long as there is an officer standing up to tell him what to do, he will do it to the best of his limited ability; but take his officers from him, he is a sheep, a goose, an ass. At the best he is a brute beast, loving his masters with the intense but dull affection of a dog.

Still, there is a potency in three million blockheads always ready to die, which would make Russia mistress of the earth if only she made the most of this raw material. If Scharnhorst, Moltke, Bismarck and Roon had been Russian subjects they might have worked in the salt mines of Siberia, or the

world might have been overrun by Cossacks. Fortunately destiny gave their services to a power which, to render it its due, has used them in a way advantageous to the general good.

The French officer thinks of the glory pertaining to his profession in war time, and is willing to work for it in time of peace. The Prussian or Prussianized German officer finds his profession glorious always—his material and moral hopes are alike bound up in it, and he slaves at its every detail; he may treat his men to our minds badly, but his own existence is barely comfortable. The Russian officer sacrifices every one and everything to himself—if not actually to his pecuniary gain, to his reputation.

Heroic gentlemen are the exclusive property of no country in Europe, neither are blackguardly scallywags; but the Russian corps of officers, unless it has been most pertinaciously maligned, numbers an unduly small proportion of the one and an appalling multitude of the other class.

A witty journalist, who was also a man of the world comparatively free from pre-

judice, has described the Russian officer of Crimean days in these terms: "The general elegance of his exterior is undisputable. His uniform is astonishingly well made. His manners are charming. . . . He appears to have considered every scheme of government which has ever attracted the attention of mankind. He believes that of Russia to be the best. He does not quarrel with you for thinking differently, if you really do so. Every man may enjoy his own opinion, and he respects yours, though he cannot partake of it. . . . He has no high and inspiring creed, no soul, no heart, but he has the jargon and seeming of them all. . . . His philosophy is pure materialism: he does not believe in anything but the present moment. His idea of the last crowning glory of human ambition is to have £50,000 and live at Paris. . . . He acts upon precisely the same convictions at Sebastopol as in Paris. He covertly laughs at the whole thing; he does not really care two straws about the issue of the struggle, except so far as it may some day affect his social position in Europe as a Russian officer. . . . As for the danger,

he neither thinks nor cares much about it. What is the use of living, if you cannot have £50,000 a year and live in Paris? The rest is all bosh!"

These are not the worst things the writer says about the Russian officer, and I have called him a man of few prejudices. Still, as a journalist writing in war time, with no doubt an eye on his public, it is only fair to sift his strictures a little: a residue will certainly remain. In an army where the highest and most august personages have notoriously peculated, it will be only natural to find imperfection in the lower ranks. Russian morality is laid down rather on an Oriental than an Occidental foundation. Let us admire the Russian officer for his intrepidity, and be grateful to him for his dishonesty, which must after all do us more good than harm.

The Austrian army is such a heterogeneous one that it is impossible to find prevailing characteristics among the rank and file, possessing as they do the virtues and vices of half Europe—German, Hungarian, Wallachian, Polish and Italian; and this lack of

sympathy is a serious weakness in the armed forces of the dual monarchy. It is true that, to take our home army alone, the English, Irish, Scots and Welsh soldiers have little in common, and in time of peace are even liable to quarrel over their national differences; but, whereas in war time these disagreements are softened with us into a mere healthy rivalry, the races that constitute the Austrian Empire have a deep-seated hatred for one another that neither discipline nor patriotism can eradicate. To gauge the value of the Austrian army in the war of the future would be hard indeed; perhaps when that war comes Austria and Hungary may fight on opposite sides.

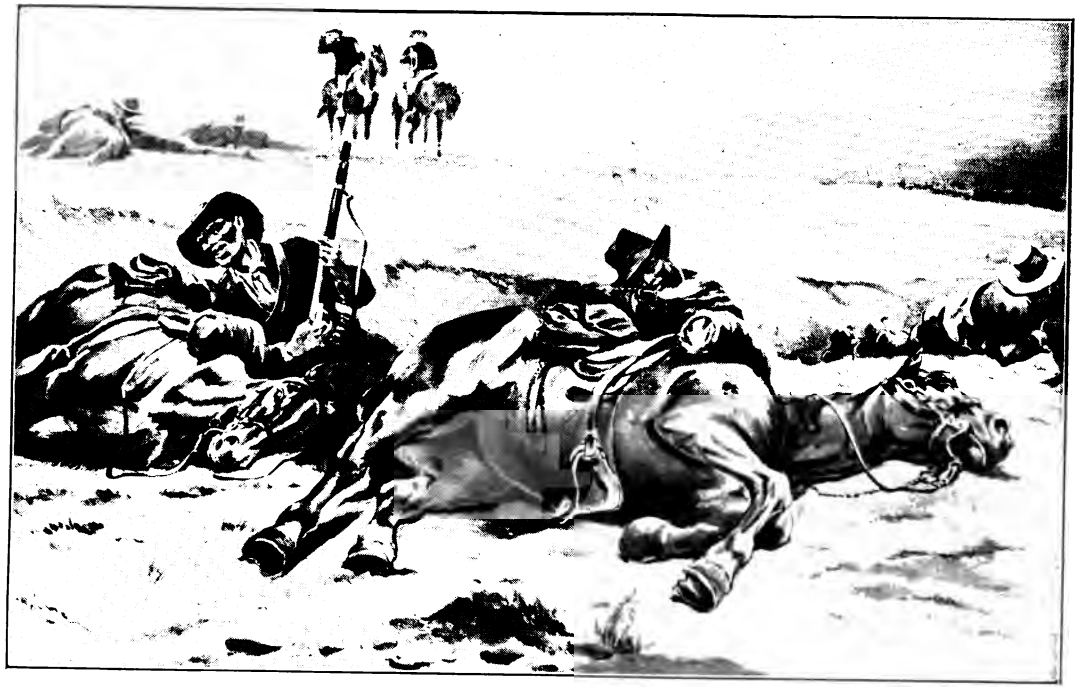
If the Austrian soldier is difficult to characterise, the Austrian officer is an unmistakable type; this may be attributed to the fact that he is not so much the servant of his country as of his prince. The traditions of the Thirty Years' War are more alive in Austria than in any other country affected by it, and the officers of the army form an exclusive, military caste, which, from whatever rank of life and even foreign race it

recruits its strength, remains always apart from the rest of the nation.

This system has many faults, and has also one indubitable advantage: there is more fraternity between the Austrian officers than among those of any other nation; the inter-regimental snobbery which is common in Prussia, notorious over here, and outrageous in Russia, being almost unheard of. It is this noble quality that has tided the Austrian Empire over the worse crises in its existence.

The training of the Austrian officers is more or less upon Prussian lines, but they are less keen students of the theoretical side of their profession, and probably their qualifications reach midway only between the Prussians and the Russians.

The United States of America cannot in the widest sense of the word be considered a military power. If it were possible for the German nation to land even the fourth part of its peace strength on the Columbian shores, however gallantly the Yankees behaved, nothing could avert a slaughter grim and great. Yet the twenty thousand men



UNITED STATES COLOURED DRAGOONS
SKIRMISHING IN INDIAN WARFARE .

who, up to the other day, constituted the regular army of America, might have stood up to any other twenty thousand the world could produce, and at a sheer slogging match beaten them horse and foot.

I do not make this statement because I hold (as I do) that the American raw military material is superior to that of other nations, but because when such a mere handful of men is to be picked from many millions, and they whose inclination tends towards a military career find that it offers them a certain competency that bears comparison with the reward of civil labour, it is impossible for that army to fall short of the best. Again, these men, being stationed away from the demoralizing associations of civil life, are all kept in condition to take the field at any moment. But what are twenty, thirty, forty thousand men as battle numbers go now? If each man were a Hercules, thirty thousand cannot fight one hundred thousand. Not Buonaparte himself ever won a battle in which he was outnumbered by two to one.

And this numerical deficiency cannot be considered in any way compensated for by

the American reserves. The militia and volunteer regiments of the United States, if recent events mean anything, must, with very few exceptions, be execrably bad. They seem to possess none of the qualities essential to the soldier save the courage and physical development of the Anglo-Saxon race. Discipline appears to be unthought of by the rank and file, while the technical knowledge the officers displayed in Cuba was beneath contempt. The history of the American reserve forces during the late war reads like an essay on the futility of mere courage. Only a well-trained soldier can ever understand that it is sheer impertinence of him to seek death until he has been commanded to do so by his officer, or his common sense, as opposed to his silly vanity, suggests the sacrifice.

At first sight the military position of the British Empire bears a strong resemblance to that of the United States of America: the standing army of each is recruited by voluntary enlistment from practically the same class of society, and stripped for the medical inspection, the Yankee recruit differs from

the British recruit chiefly in his accent; he is a man who has elected to serve his country in the field in return for board, lodging, and pocket money during the period for which he engages; and even though that period may be a short one, it will leave a mark on his character and appearance which will distinguish him from the civilians of the State until his dying day. The armies of the United States and of Great Britain are therefore alike in having their first line composed of the best —because the only real—soldiers among all the great nations, and they are again alike in having their second line composed of irregular troops, who, however gallant, could not always be relied upon to face an equal number of the troops of the leading continental powers.

So far the likeness goes, and no farther. For America has only to find a single army corps among her sixty odd millions, while Britain has to raise from among less than forty million home population a standing army of nearly two hundred thousand; so that, putting aside the question that the American army offers far greater induce-

ments to enlistment than ours, as regards pay, maintenance, and pleasantness of station, it is evident the American army must contain a greater proportion of first-class fighting men than ours.

On the other hand, the greater number of our militia and volunteer regiments are probably very far superior to the militia and volunteers of the United States. The middle classes of this country, from which the volunteer army is drawn, may not be so bright intellectually as their American cousins, but they are far saner, and sanity is the one thing that will steady soldiers, to whom discipline is, after all, only a phrase in which is couched an appeal to their private honour. Probably our volunteers are at least as gallant as those of the friendly house, and while the American courage shows itself in pride, let us trust that ours will be content with its traditional quality, Self-respect. The latter is more useful for military purposes.

The British regular of to-day is not, and could not be, so sound a fighting man as his ancestor of Peninsular days, but I personally

believe that he is as far superior to the rivals of his day as these old war-dogs were in their time. And the British officer of to-day, if it is impossible for him to surpass his progenitors in stubborn courage, does not fall short of them in personal gallantry, and, with all his faults, is infinitely more deserving of the confidence of brave men. There were some Bayards in the old days who fought the French from the defeat at Turcoing in 1794 to the crowning victory of 1815, and then, still subaltern officers, were purchased over by carpet knights who sought the reflected glory of leading to Hyde Park or Finchley Common a grim and battered remnant of "that unconquerable British infantry." But the majority of the Peninsular officers whom fortune favoured, if men-at-arms "without fear," were not knights "without reproach."

As there is hardly a company without a cowardly man in it, so there is probably no regiment without a feeble officer: gentlemen who ask for the depôt when the standard points to discomfort; gentlemen who will not grip the right hand of duty unless they

know open shame to be in the left; gentlemen, in short, "by Queen's commission," without other claim to the title. Yet I am convinced that the average British officer—preferably the line officer—is as straight a man, and as strong a soldier, as any people in the world can show.

That the standing army of Great Britain is numerically inadequate to the pretensions of our Empire has been proved too often to call for discussion here; but, small as it is, it would be ample if every healthy male child born under the shadow of the Imperial Crown were trained to be a man, with the essential accompaniment of that minimum of food on which mankind can exist. As for the unhealthy children—whatever brought about the decadence of the Roman power, it was certainly not the weeding out of the "physically unfit."

## CHAPTER III

# Of War in our Time

IT is doubtful whether the mere whim of a prince, albeit often bringing about a purely professional cutting of throats, ever plunged two great countries into war. It is absolutely certain that a European conflict could not spring from such a cause to-day.

If William of Hohenzollern had not turned his back on M. Benedetti at Ems on July 16th, 1870, it is credible that France might not have declared war against Prussia on July 19th ; to the student of politics it is incredible that the delay should have been long. Similarly, if Napoleon Buonaparte had caned Lord Whitworth in 1803, this bellicose act might well have led to the Dictator's nose being punched by the Ambas-

sador, but Nelson's flag would hardly have overshadowed Toulon one day sooner.

War, in our time at least, is brought about by the mutual jealousy of nations, whether commercial or territorial. It may arise from other causes, even purely emotional ones, such as fear or contempt, but in all cases there is a popular quite as much as an individual antipathy.

If the King of Spain had fallen into the hands of the American forces, he might have visited Banbury Cross mounted on the knee of President McKinley, what time his army and navy were at death grips with the Yankees.

When Louis Napoleon surrendered to King William he addressed him as "dear brother," the bulk of his troops and the nation at large speaking of their conquerors as "Prussian pigs."

Most English schoolboys accept the great Buonaparte as one of their heroes, but that does not prevent them from hating the French in a healthy, international way.

Austria fought Prussia tooth and nail three and thirty years ago; to-day she thinks of

drawing apart from her sister Hungary to become a province of the German Empire, with the Prussian King as Over-lord.

The pure dynastic war—if such a thing there ever was outside the imagination of the historians—is done with, and put away in the play-box of time. There remains the war of peoples—Teuton and Latin, Hun and Frank.

The Russian monarchy is the most absolute in Europe, but the extinction of the Romanoffs, root and branch, would not falsify the road map to Stamboul, nor shake the newly laid rails out of their chairs in Manchuria.

And that is the real meaning of the immense hosts which now weigh so heavily on the soil of the globe.

Bismarck, Roon and Moltke did not invent universal service; it was an ancient principle of essentially democratic origin, worked out to its extreme logical end by an autocracy. "The nation in arms" is a cry as old as the history of Sparta. There is only one cry older still, and that is "The Fatherland in danger."

The French nation in arms gave Napoleon his glory for its use of his genius; against the Russian nation in arms that genius could not prevail. In the war of kings—with Austria, Prussia and the despotlings—the strong man leading strong men had his way, but the war of kings was at an end when he crossed the Niemen. There he was plunged in what Ségur calls "*Une guerre de classe, une guerre de parti, une guerre de religion, une guerre nationale, toutes les guerres à la fois:* a class war, a party war, a religious war, a national war, all war at once." And the sequel has been written many times.

In the old days a State might be at war without the fact being known to the great number of its citizens, unless of course invasion or exceptionally heavy taxation called their attention to the fact. It is likely that the name of Marlborough conveyed meaning to fewer Frenchmen in 1705 than it will convey in 1905, but Moltke's name is familiar to every living Gaul of middle age. The reason is simple: Marlborough only knocked, however loudly, at France's door, while Moltke tramped upstairs and down-



LORD CLARK'S IRISH REGIMENT IN FRENCH SERVICE ATTACKING AT CLOSE QUARTERS. BATTLE OF RAMILIES . . . . . .

stairs all over her house. Yet Marlborough spoiled her worse than ever Moltke did, for Marlborough struck her again and again in the days of her pride, Moltke only in the hour of her vanity.

It is a very respected saying that France has been the firebrand, and Flanders (or Belgium, to use the now more familiar word) the cockpit of Europe; but France has already been once her own cockpit, and Belgium is bent on the production of individual firebrands if she does not yet think of becoming one herself.

In his great work on *The Future of War*, the perusal of which is said to have suggested to the Czar the convocation of the Peace Conference at the Hague, Mr. Bloch has justly observed that for a country like Belgium to go to war, say with Denmark, would be impossible, as the stronger Powers whose commercial arrangements might be affected would put a stop to such a contest at once. He aptly compares the relations now subsisting between the little and the great Powers with the old-time connection of graves and bishops with kings and emperors.

The only two minor Powers who are strong in proportion to their territorial extent are Holland and Switzerland, and geographical conditions make it almost impossible for them to have quarrels and quite impossible to fight them out, at any rate until aerial navigation is a little better understood.

Yet within even fifty years Great Britain, Holland, Belgium, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland are the only countries in Europe which have not seen war, apart from civil tumult, waged within their frontiers. Go back another year and Switzerland is found engaged in that curious internecine struggle, the war of the Sonderbund. Since then Austria, Russia, Turkey, France, Italy, Denmark, and Greece (not to exhaust the catalogue) have all felt the heel of the victorious invader, and even Prussia has had hostile footfall on her soil. So that practically within the present generation England alone of the five great European Powers has not been compelled to fight for her life.

Mr. Bloch holds, however, that what has happened may be left out of mind. War may have been possible; it is possible no

longer. By war he does not mean such "trumpery" affairs as the Spanish-American or Greco-Turkish campaigns, nor yet our punitive expeditions, but "the war that has haunted the imagination of mankind for the last thirty years, the war in which great nations armed to the teeth were to fling themselves with all their resources into a struggle for life and death."

Mr. Bloch declares that such a war is thrice impossible—"impossible alike from a military, economic and political point of view," and on this thesis he has written an essay in six ponderous volumes which the Czar submitted to a council of experts. And these experts, as Mr. Bloch somewhat ingenuously boasts, recommended it as a manual for staff officers.

For the political impossibility of a European war Mr. Bloch makes out a strong case. There is no doubt that France and Russia will not lightly embark in a war against the Triple Alliance while the balance of power swings so evenly. A single combat between France and Germany is still less likely. But if Prussia were to be deserted

by her vassals and allies, then France and Russia would rend her tooth and nail. Let us grant that at this present hour a European war is a political impossibility, and at the same time remember that political impossibilities are transient things.

We come to the economic impossibility of war. Mr. Bloch is one of the great economists of our time, and I shall not attempt to dispute his figures or to deny that war is likely to spell famine and starvation: I can only observe that it seems frequently to have done so in the past, but we know it was carried on all the same. Not to go too far back, Prussia presents an interesting study in the time of Frederick the Great.

But it is the military impossibility of war which is Mr. Bloch's most specious argument. Mr. Bloch has filled his mind so full of the mechanical adjuncts of war that he has left the soldiers out of the question altogether, except as the mere coins to be swept by cannon and magazine-rifle croupiers into the pool of death. He forgets that the soldiers are not merely the skittles but the skittle players also, and war is a game at which,



"WAR BEING A FREE FIGHT, RULE THERE IS NONE." THE ENEMY AT OMDURMAN . .

whatever the cost, the best team commonly wins.

War being a free fight between multitudes, rule there is none. After a battle, dormant humanity may wake to suggest care of the wounded, mingled pride and fear prompt the living to honour the dead; but while the battle rages these emotions should find no place in the good soldier's breast. The man who is merciful when he should be savage is a moral weakling, and he would deserve better of his country if he laboured peacefully at home to supply the sinews of war.

What are known as the laws, or more properly the customs, of war are conventions accepted by civilized nations, the design of which is to protect the individual soldier from greater hurt than is necessary to nullify his military value. Civilized armies are content to blow off each other's arms and legs; they do not care to go so far as to rub salt into the wounds. Such torture would be indefensible in a military sense, if only because of the waste of time. Also they are designed to shelter the non-combatant from wanton injury; but it being clearly defined

that war is brought about by the desire of one nation to overpower and cripple another, if not to determine her existence, it must not be imagined that the peaceful inhabitants of an invaded country do not or should not suffer directly at the hands of their aggressors. Their lives and persons only are sacred—perhaps, by the best traditions of war, also their personal goods and chattels—but they have little to hope for beyond that, except quick riddance from their visitors. They may have claim for damages against the Government which has failed to protect them; they have none against those with whom their Government is at war.

Becky Sharp at Brussels was not very frightened when she heard the guns boom at Waterloo, but Jos Sedley, with more to lose, was damnably so. And no doubt he had learned at Indian mess tables how the "poor brave soldier" turns a penny now and then.

The mind of man cannot conceive a more elusive chimæra than the divine spirit of peace which gentle philosophers have conjured up to their own confusion. Manslaughter is undeniably going out of fashion

as a sport as the world grows older; but war, if it ever ceases, at least will not do so until all the nations of the earth shall own the supremacy of one race. Whether that race will speak German, English, Russian or a language yet unfamiliar to Europe, no man can tell. I do not for myself think it will be German; I am far from sure that it shall be English; I dread that it may be Russian. Perhaps after all, as the present commander-in-chief was wont to say, Chinese will have its day.

One thing is certain: it will be the native tongue of that people who have studied to the best effect how to keep their powder dry.

## CHAPTER IV

# The Staff

THE staff are the aristocracy of war—socially, inasmuch as they are drawn exclusively from the officers; intellectually, as they are supposed to be the mental cream of these officers. Staff officers have been called the brains of armies, but that is not acutely observed: the general of an army, possibly coupled with his chief of staff, is the brain; the staff officers are the highly-developed nerves through which the brain communicates with the other organs, at once conveying to it impressions and transmitting from it will power.

The relations between a general and his chief of staff are not a little puzzling to the lay reader of military history. He finds Napoleon commander-in-chief in the Russian campaign of 1812, with Berthier his chief

of staff; William of Prussia commander-in-chief in the Franco-German war of 1870, with Moltke as chief of staff; Sir Garnet Wolseley commander-in-chief in the Egyptian campaign of 1882, with Sir John Adye as chief of staff; and Sir Robert Low commander-in-chief in Chitral in 1895, with Colonel Bindon Blood as chief of staff; but, for the life of him, he will not be able to deduce any clear rules of conduct applicable to even two out of the four cases.[1]

He finds that Napoleon snapped out orders and ideas which Berthier reduced to the most limpid lucidity for the subordinate commanders; that Moltke advised William of Prussia what should be done, and that William issued his fiat absolutely in accordance with this "advice." The part that Sir John Adye, a gallant gunner of the old school, took in Sir Garnet's councils in Egypt is not clear to me; but it was certainly neither that of Moltke on the one hand nor Berthier on the other; and as for Sir Bindon Blood in 1895, although himself a sapper, he figures chiefly in detached command of the cavalry.

The fact is, the chief of the staff may be the most important man with the army, as in the case of Moltke, or his duties may be nominal; usually, however, the chief of staff, whether of personal importance or not, is hard-worked, if only in a clerical capacity.

The theory of his position is that he is the technical adviser of the executive—that is to say, of the general in command. He has no authority himself, except of course over his departmental subordinates and that appropriate to his army rank, but it is for him to suggest the direction in which the supreme authority may be exercised, or at the very least to indicate the objections when the supreme authority seems to be at fault.

Modern war-making is a business so infinitely complicated that it is scarcely possible for one man to remember what has been done, to see what is being done, and to decide what shall be done, at all moments of the day. I say scarcely possible; it is not impossible, but it tends to become impossible. Buonaparte for many years succeeded in accomplishing the feat; perhaps he could do it even under the triple-fold compli-

cated conditions of to-day. It is likely that he would try, and possible that he might fail.

It is a commonplace of psychology that the power to obtain and assimilate knowledge does not easily ally itself with a rapid and virile decision as to the use of it; the first is the virtue of the scholar, the latter of the man of action. Either alone marks out the man of distinction, together they beget those great deeds, which we call "strokes of genius."

The great intellect which can possess itself of a penetrating knowledge of the whole dispositions of friend and enemy cannot fail to realize how delicately sways the scale of war; how a thousand lives may hang on one man's life, and he a nobody; how the overwhelming advance of ten thousand horse may be turned into rout by a dry ditch a stupid patrol has neglected to report; how thirty thousand infantry may fail to accomplish an apparently easy task, because at the critical moment the ammunition train has bolted; how the careless jerking of an aide-de-camp's thumb may turn troops in a direc-

tion from which they cannot be deflected until beaten; how he himself may give away his country by believing something to be what the enemy has cunningly pretended it to be, but which in point of fact it is not. "A general," said Turenne, "who has made no mistakes in war has seldom made war."

The more a man reflects on knowledge which, however probable, cannot be certain, the more he is obsessed by the danger of error. It is seldom that one plan of campaign will appear perfect and all others impossible; if it does, it is more than likely suggested by some artifice of the enemy.

A general who is his own virtual chief of staff, knowing that there are several ways in which he may fight his battle, will often, in spite of himself as it were, attempt to combine the virtues of them all; and even if he has the force of character to stick to one, he cannot concentrate himself absolutely upon it for thinking of the others. Particularly will he experience this if the plan adopted falls at all short of the success it promised.

Therefore the great merit of a commander is hardihood—infinite courage, physical and moral; the virtues of a chief of staff, brightness of intellect, keenness of judgment, united of course to the personal courage proper to an officer and a gentleman. A timid commander—timid, I mean, in dread of responsibility—will thwart the schemes of the most brilliant chief of staff; but the most audacious general will not fly in the face of his expert adviser unless the latter is a proved poltroon. So that while the caution of the staff officer will temper the rashness of a general, the born leader of men will put into motion the scheme his adviser can show him to be reasonably good, without allowing himself to be worried by undue misgivings as to its defects. He will boldly undertake the responsibility of the plan which appears to promise success, while the more intellectual originator may be inclined to vacillate over its execution.

But there are many commanders who virtually use their chief of staff with his subordinates as a mere secretariat and inter-

mediary between themselves and the various units of their command—people to find out and advise them what has happened, but not to presume to suggest to them what should happen. On the one hand, Wellington was capable of dismissing any aide-de-camp who ventured a criticism in his presence; on the other, his colleague Beresford had turned his horse's head at Albuera when Henry Hardinge said, "I think, sir, I ought to tell you that you have a peerage in one hand and a court martial in the other." And the marshal, who, although his personal bravery was above suspicion, lacked strength of character, plucked up his resolution and answered, "I will go for the peerage." Whereupon the movement was made which turned the fortunes of an apparently lost field.

Whether, however, a chief of staff is the fountain of his commander's ideas or not, he must at least be thoroughly cognizant of what they are. The great captains have been at variance as to whether they should communicate their plans to their subordinates or not. In the main the arguments and

opinions run in favour of secrecy. Machiavelli represents the Roman general Metellus as saying, when asked one day what were his intentions for the next, "If my shirt knew that, I would put it in the fire." But the general who keeps a military secret from his staff runs the same risks as the patient who disguises his symptoms before his physician, or the litigant who tells a crooked story to his attorney.

Precise and admirably reasoned must be the letter of his orders if they convey his meaning to all without divulging the spirit that is behind. And even if his orders be executed without error, if he fall in the battle or receive a contusion that may render him unconscious for an hour, none knows what may happen to his army; for not only has the master deserted the ship, but he has taken the charts, the compass and, one might say, the helm itself with him.

The general represents his monarch in the field, and in turn his staff officers embody him on those parts of the field where he cannot be. Even at Waterloo, where his battle line only extended a couple of thousand yards

and he himself kept constantly on the move, Wellington succeeded in using up all his staff, several of whom were killed and wounded, without preserving a continuous knowledge of what was going forward, and indeed contrived to pick up an erroneous notion of the behaviour of his artillery, which he was never rid of to his dying day.

What, then, could one man hope to see in our time, when, as Golz the Prussian strategist has aptly pointed out, the whole Franco-German frontier gives barely room for the armies of these two Powers to face each other in battle array?

Not only must the commander-in-chief of a great army rely upon his staff for information, but also the commanders of corps; and even the divisional leaders cannot keep their eyes on all their ten thousand men at once. Seventeen officers are allotted to the staff duties of a British infantry division.

The distinction of idea and division of labour between the various generals, their staffs, and the regimental officers may be

very crudely stated thus: the commander-in-chief decides in what parts of his position the enemy is to be attacked, in what direction he must be driven; and he allots to each corps its share in the business. The corps commanders receive these directions, which are invariably in black and white, through the headquarter staff; and each, having decided how best he may carry out his work, instructs his divisional leaders in accordance through his own staff; the divisional leaders again communicate in writing with their brigadiers, and they again with their battalion, squadron, and battery chiefs in turn; and here, properly speaking, the duties of the staff end. But indirectly the original orders are amplified, although now in speech, by the regimental officers, and it may be finally by the sergeants and corporals; for while the objective is precisely stated by the brigadier or battalion leader, the best means of getting to it must virtually be decided by the company leader and his subalterns.

Often a confusion exists with regard to the meaning of the words "staff officer," for

it is a common although loose habit to speak of a "regimental staff." Shortly said, staff officers are those officers who represent the general and his plans; regimental officers, those officers who represent the rank and file and their capabilities.

It is not customary for regimental officers to demur to their instructions on the ground of their impracticability, but it sometimes happens. A perfectly justifiable case occurred at the battle of Talavera, in 1809, when the 23rd Light Dragoons and Arentschild's German Hussars were sent by Wellesley to charge the French Infantry, and suddenly found a ravine and watercourse divided them from the enemy in square. The 23rd dashed furiously on to utter and bootless grief, but Arentschild promptly reined up, saying, "I will not kill my young mens!"

Staff officers being, as I have said, the representatives of the supreme authority on all parts of the field, they carry with them a tremendous moral responsibility, not merely as to what they say, but as to the way in which they say it and even as to their looks.

In another chapter I shall quote a description of Napoleon's reception of a staff officer who galloped up to him, proclaiming some plan to be impossible. It is imperative that neither by word nor deed shall a staff officer ever betray emotion as to the course of a battle. When an aide-de-camp approaches the commander of a battalion, all eyes are centred on him: if he is cheerful, the men scent victory and renown; if he looks glum, they feel themselves already whipped, and, answering their officers' call to advance, they do so gingerly, under the impression that they are being sacrificed to no avail.

And whereas the staff officer is expected to have the knowledge to set his superior right where the latter has made an obvious slip, and the tact to do so without impertinence, he must be very careful not to colour the orders he hears with the faintest tinge of his personal predilections. Unless these orders are written, it is difficult for young officers with opinions of their own to refrain from suggesting them. Even with a written order, Lord Raglan's galloper, poor Nolan of the 15th Hussars (who was an out-and-out

believer in the force of cavalry), by an uncalled-for word brought about the disaster to the Light Brigade at Balaklava.

This, again, is one of the great difficulties of our military system. A staff officer whose regimental experience has been with cavalry is for the dragoons doing everything; the gunner will have it that artillery fire is the arbiter of war; the sapper wants to fortify in season and out of season; and as for the infantryman, he thinks the other arms were better off the field. Only a general with a very clear head can always detect the professional bias in the reports and opinions which do not allow of lengthy consideration.

Stupidity and vicious habits may ruin the career of a regimental officer, but his shortcomings at worst can only cause local injury. Provided that he remembers that it is his business to go forward, his stupidity under fire matters little; and even if he is drunk, it will probably make him only reckless, which in the sphere wherein he acts is a fault on the right side. But the stupidity of a staff officer or his want of self-control may ruin a cause. Sir John Moore was hopelessly lost

in the last month of 1808 had not the aide-de-camp who carried Buonaparte's instructions to Soult allowed himself to become involved in a tavern scuffle. The officer was slain and his despatches sold to the British for a few guineas. Their contents told Moore, who imagined that he was going to give Soult a drubbing, that Napoleon himself was at his heels with fifty thousand men, including the Guard. He had barely time to turn and escape. His retreat, in spite of himself, was a disastrous one, but luckily for him Napoleon had again to take the field against Austria; the pick of the French troops relinquished the pursuit, and Moore was just able to beat the others under Soult at Corunna, falling himself at the moment of victory. Had not Buonaparte's aide-de-camp failed in the discretion called for by his duty, not Moore alone but the whole British army in Spain would have been lost to their country, and it is doubtful whether Wellesley's Peninsular campaigns, which commenced in May, 1809, would have been sanctioned by Parliament.

Napoleon laid down the qualifications of a

staff officer as the ability to read a map, to understand a reconnaissance, to issue orders, and to give a lucid account of the most complicated manœuvres of an army. But these are the very barest essentials, and far more is asked of the staff officer in our time.

"Mobilization" is a word that has been very freely bandied about in this country during the last three or four years. We have heard of the mobilization of a flying squadron, and of the militia reserve, and the subject was debated by many who imagined that the militia reserve were men retired from the militia but still liable to serve in it, and not impossibly by others who fancied the flying squadron were timorous horse marines. Certain it is that fifty per cent. of those who read the word "mobilization" had a mightily vague notion of what it meant, and few dictionaries could do more than put them on the right track to find out.

Let me attempt to define it here. To mobilize an army is to gather all its essential component parts and to put them in such condition that they may readily take the field as a cohesive whole.



MOUNTED INFANTRY
SKIRMISHING . . .

Since 1815 the great European Powers have resolved their immense hosts into several parts of fairly equal size, and each part perfectly organized in itself is called an army corps. Recently Britain, although the comparatively small number of her forces did not so loudly call for it, has adopted the same system.

Each of these army corps is commanded by a general, and is capable of acting alone, as it numbers over thirty thousand men of all arms, including four squadrons of horse. When more cavalry are required, it is accompanied by an "independent cavalry division," with its own horse batteries, mounted engineers and (in our army) mounted infantry with machine guns.

The army corps is divided again into two (Continental) or three (British) infantry divisions, each with its attendant hundred or more sabres, sappers, guns, ammunition columns, etc.

The division again (commanded by a lieutenant-general) is divided into two infantry brigades (each in our army accompanied by two machine guns), which are

commanded by major-generals and again divided into so many battalions of so many companies: in Great Britain, four battalions of eight companies; in Germany, France and Italy, six battalions of four companies; in Austria, seven battalions of four companies; and in Russia, eight battalions of four companies.

The battalion, commanded by a colonel or lieutenant-colonel, is generally considered to be the fighting unit of infantry (as are the squadron of cavalry and battery of artillery), but the company is often of great tactical importance on the field, and has at all times for administrative purposes a distinct existence of its own. It is commanded by a major, or more often a captain, and is further divided into two half-companies, in charge each of a subaltern, whose command is again divided into two sections under the control of a non-commissioned officer, and as a general rule the tenth part of a section of a company of a battalion of a brigade of a division of a British army corps will prove to be that fairly well-known quantity Private Thomas Atkins.

To mobilize an army corps, therefore, entails the raising of the establishment of each company from peace to war strength, by calling up the reserve men of the regiment and serving them out the uniform, and equipment that are or should be always kept ready in store for such emergency; it means drilling them into a state of reasonable efficiency, to take the rust off them and make them fit to stand in rank with their younger and less sturdy but better exercised comrades.

It means providing them with the arrangements for getting to the front, it means the allocation of their strength at the front, and it means the contrivance of ways for feeding at once the human being and the fighting machine at the front.

Mr. Bloch, in the volumes to which I have already referred, lays great stress on the suffering that is in his opinion sure to arise from the difficulty of supplying with regularity the huge modern armies in the field. Particularly he contends this must arise because future battle conditions will necessitate troops being scattered broadcast instead of

concentrated at particular spots. If Mr. Bloch had studied the positive history of the wars that have been instead of the theoretical essays on the wars that may be, he would have been saved from this bad blunder by the knowledge that the great difficulty in feeding troops heretofore has lain in the fact that it was necessary for battle purposes to keep them concentrated, and consequently few roads were available for the transport. Any quartermaster-sergeant could have told Mr. Bloch that the greater lateral space troops occupy in proportion to their numbers, the easier it is to find ways and means of keeping them supplied. It must be admitted, however, that the army of Mr. Bloch's country has always been notoriously deficient in its commissariat arrangements.

It is a remarkable fact that the German army in 1870-71, perhaps the largest that any single nation ever put in the field, is the only one on record that lost more men in battle than through disease or other "natural" causes.

## CHAPTER V

# Cavalry

SPEED and strength are now, as on the day when, three hundred and twenty-seven years before Christ, Alexander's cuirassiers bore down the horsemen of Porus, the essential qualities of the cavalier. For speed and strength are the great forces which serve cavalry in what is, has always been, and demonstrably must remain its great tactical end—*shock action.*

"Shock action": the word conveys its meaning. It brings before us at once the old dense columns, the modern long lines of galloping horsemen speeding down to drop their ponderous weight on a like body of the enemy, or it may be his infantry or his guns, or even the waggons conveying his powder and shot or his bread and butter. To dash

against, to overturn by sheer physical impact, is the meaning of shock action. And shock action may be considered the meaning of cavalry; for cavalry incapable, through defective organization or poor leading, of shock tactics is of no more use on the field of joined battle than are mounted infantry or bicyclists.

The most primitive application of this "shock" principle was in the chariot. The ancient British war-carriages of which the axles were prolonged into scythe-shaped blades, mowers of men, driven at the speed of a London fire engine on a clear road, must have been just a shade more awe-inspiring and less dangerous than if the occupants had mounted the horses, cut the traces, and ridden equally compactly spear in hand.

The Homeric chariot, however, did not fulfil the cavalry ideal. It seems to have been a mere agent of locomotion, and the heroes who journeyed in it were rather to be regarded as mounted infantry than dragoons.

And yet the very word "dragoon" is in a sense misleading, for although since a hundred years and more it has been accepted




SCOTS GREYS AND FRENCH
CUIRASSIERS AT WATERLOO

as a generic name for the true cavalier who speeds with the white arm to confound his enemies, yet it must be allowed that the "dragon" from which he takes his name was a sort of carbine or bastard musket, and that the first "dragooneer" was taught to use it dismounted and leave the cavalry-charging to his betters in the cuirassiers.

In ancient times cavalry were not greatly used on European battlefields, the phalanx formation being absolutely invulnerable to the attack of horse; but in the East the cavalier was the typical fighting man.

The old Franks had no mounted soldiers until Charlemagne heralded the days of chivalry with his freshly raised establishment of knights.

War in the middle ages became almost altogether a series of multiplied duels between mounted men-at-arms.

Scientific cavalry-leading there was little or none. If a general hit upon the right thing now and then, it was either done on the inexplicable prompting of the moment or was blundered into by mere hazard.

The English leaders, compelled to econo-

mise their resources in the Continental wars, owing not only to the reluctance of their commoners, to indulge in military extravagances, but also to the difficulties of transport over sea, would occasionally indulge in little artifices of a tactical nature; but the attempts of the Continental chivalry to apply these lessons were more often laughable than anything else.

An amusing instance may be given. As will be remembered, the number of his knights at Creçy being altogether too small to fight the French cavalry as cavalry, the Black Prince (or more likely his father, for the prince was a child) dismounted them and formed them somewhat in the manner of a phalanx to strengthen the regular infantry —pike and bowmen. When the Duc d'Alençon's chivalry thundered down through the trampled ranks of their own Genoese archers the English knights' spears, presented *en baïonnette,* held them grimly at bay till the flying arrows had made a slaughter of the flower of them.

Well and good: the French had never heard of infantry repelling horsemen before,

but, to be sure, it was dismounted cavalry that did it. After that, for several battles, including Poictiers, Cocherel, and Auray, the French knights dismounted and charged the English knights on foot. With whom the victory lay hardly calls for mention.

When the middle age was drawing to an end, and the increasing steadiness of infantry armed with pike, bow, and firelock, and supported noisily by cannon of monstrous appearance and murderous title, if otherwise harmless, had made the frontal attack of mailed knights no longer successful as a matter of course, the mounted arm fell temporarily into decay, and warriors broke their lances only at the tourney. At Bosworth Field, which may be called the last of the mediæval battles, at least in England, apart from Richard's personal encounters there was little mounted fighting, and no serious combat of horse at all: the main array of both armies pushed pikes, and it would seem pushed them but indifferently well.

It is to be remarked that Shakespeare's heroes always fight on foot, and that was not merely because contemporaneous theatri-

cal exigencies precluded the appearance of horses on the stage, but because the soldiers Shakespeare knew only crossed saddle for purposes of display.

Elizabethan England devoted her warlike energies to the building of sea-power. Her military adventures, save for Leicester's silly parades in the Low Countries and Essex's fiasco in Ireland, lay in the attack of littoral towns and general harrying of the enemy's coasts—designs vicious in intention and wasteful in execution.

The German *Reiterei* still made some pretence of being cavalry; but we may gather from the fact that during the siege of Zutphen in 1586 the Prince of Parma despatched 1,500 Spanish arquebusiers *mounted behind light horsemen* to disperse 2,000 of them and that the arquebusiers surprised and overcame them, that they had grown shockingly inefficient and must have wanted all the cavalry virtues. For although cavalry may be forgiven many errors and shortcomings on the field of battle, squadrons which allow themselves to be surprised on the line of march, and that by infantry

mounted on cattle carrying double weight, should be disbanded with ignominy.

Cavalry-leading seemed a lost art in Europe when the Thirty Years' War opened its long course of devastation, from which, the Iron Chancellor had it, Germany has not yet recovered. Yet one great quality of cavalry was shown in a startling and dramatic manner early in the war.

It was when Thurn, at the head of the fortune-favoured Bohemian rebels, hammered at the gates of Vienna, and the malcontents of the city bearded the sovereign in his palace, and even in the heat of argument laid hands upon the sacred person of the Hapsburg.

"This scene," says Gindely, "had continued for nearly an hour, and its bitterness grew even more intense for Ferdinand, when all at once there came a change. A day or two before, the king had directed that the defence of the city should be strengthened by calling in the small garrisons of some neighbouring places; the execution of his order came exactly at the opportune moment. While Ferdinand was

subjected in the hall of audience to the deepest humiliation which in his whole life he had personally experienced, and it could not be perceived how the contest would end, there was suddenly heard the sound of a rapidly approaching cavalry troop. It consisted of four companies of a regiment of cuirassiers which was just being formed, and which on the day before, with a strength of 400 men, had set out from Krems, and about eleven o'clock in the forenoon arrived in Vienna, where the commander of the arsenal, Gilbert von Saint Hilaire, placed himself at their head. Their appearance did not fail of its effect in the audience hall. . . . Some at once ran in fright as if all was over with them. Their language, which a moment before was bold even to daring, changed suddenly, and as if by magic the usual forms of intercourse between prince and people resumed their sway. With a few utterances answering to this state of things, the deputation took their leave." And Thurn, finding no partisans awaiting him in the city, was compelled to abandon his enterprise and retire to Bohemia.

It is not mere rhetoric to say that the present occupant of the Austrian throne owes his seat on it to the mobility of these four hundred raw equestrians. It is quite certain that infantry with the same start would never have arrived in time, nor is it unlikely that the clatter of racing hoofs and clashing steel may have saved Ferdinand from describing such a parabolic course through the window as had been the lot of his regents at Prague. Gilbert von Saint Hilaire's galloping cuirassiers were the advance guard of the cavalry of the world speeding back to occupy again their great *rôle* in war.

And yet the imperial army was not to develop a great squadron leader. Waldstein, or, as he is popularly called, Wallenstein, might have become one, but he had much to learn from his deadly enemy, the Lion of the North. Gustavus Adolphus suffered from the obsession of his time with regard to firearms, and he allowed his troopers to fire their pistols as they charged; but at least he insisted that they should charge, and arrayed them in only three ranks for that purpose, while the squadrons of Tilly were drawn up

in no less than ten ranks, and were as dilatory in their movements as it is possible for horseflesh to survive.

Oliver Cromwell may be appraised as not only the most remarkable brewer and strongest-minded Christian England has ever produced, but also perhaps the very boldest of her dragoons. He could not lead a charge with the impetus of Prince Rupert, who, whether his squadrons were horsemen or ships, always charged, and held all other manœuvres unworthy of a gentleman; but he understood that the true weapons of cavalry were horse and sword, and he trained them accordingly, discountenancing pyrotechnical displays as far as possible—all much to the disgust of certain of his party, who found this horsiness ungodly.

The brilliant and unhappy Montrose went one better than either Cromwell or Rupert, for at Auldearn field, on the 9th of May, 1645, his cavalry, under wild Lord Lewis Gordon, "charges the left wing of Baillie's Covenanters, and that with a new form of fight, for he discharges all shooting of pistols and carbines, only with their swords to charge

quite through their enemies." The order is as high-spirited as any one of Seydlitz or Ziethen.

Alas! it never rains but it pours. At Kilsyth a little later a regiment of Covenanting cavalry, over-eager to show they too could charge, advancing without orders, galloped into an ambush of Montrose's musketeers and were badly beaten, whereupon the wiseacres shook their heads and treated the new cavalry-leading as a flash in the pan of Chivalry.

Still, for quite a century, the majority of cavalry generals tolerated or even encouraged this miserable saltpetre practice. A brilliant exception occurred at the Boyne Water when King James's horse, mainly Irish, but with a steadying leaven of English and Scots, under General Hamilton and the Duke of Berwick, by the sheer dash of their repeated onslaughts, turned the fortunes of the day again and again, and bade fair to save it altogether but for the crass incompetence of Tyrconnel. Ten successive charges did these horsemen make that day, overturning La Caillemote's French and Solmes's Danes, and even check-

ing the Dutch Guards, William's *Corps d'élite* after they had driven the Legitimist infantry off the field. To their steel fell old Marshal Schomberg.

About this time light cavalry on the Oriental model began to find their way into Western Europe. Marshal Luxembourg, being impressed with (the appearance chiefly it would seem of) some Hungarian hussars which his own cavalry had handled pretty roughly, took some squadrons of them into his service. It is not at all clear what use he made of them, but so mightily did they please him that presently he sent a troop to Paris in charge of a despatch.

Whatever their military exploits, their social success was great and immediate; the ladies of Paris demanded that a regiment of French hussars should be raised, and at once it was done. In a military sense the practical distinction between a hussar and an ordinary dragoon was that he scaled a few pounds less, and carried a sabre or curved blade with a single edge instead of a sword or straight blade with a double edge. But that was not enough for the new French hussars: if savage

horsemen were the fashion, savage horsemen they would be. Accordingly the Houssards du Maréchal de Luxembourg pushed their moustachios down to their chests, when civilization went beardless, and shaved their heads bare all but an amazingly Oriental tuft on the crown, when civilization attached more importance to its periwig than its small clothes. Tunic, breeches and boots were worn next the body, without under-garment of any description, and fur cap on the head and a panther skin slung round the neck completed their apparel.

Yet it was not for these new-fangled centaurs to give Luxembourg the only sight he ever had of a real cavalry charge. They were the old Household Horse of the Bourbons, the Black and Grey Musquetaires with the Dragoons that came crashing down on the Prince of Wurtemberg's hard-hitten division at Steenkirke. "Sword in hand—no firing—cold steel only," cried these gentlemen of France, and for the nonce they rode over the gentleman of Britain personified in the English foot guards and the pick of the Scottish infantry.

Luxembourg's last victory, that of Landen, has been credited to the same troops, but it is not evident that their achievements there pertained essentially to the cavalry nature.

Yet when Frederick II. of Hohenzollern, the "Great King," as the Prussian Army yet loves to call him, came to the throne, he found that the magnificent-looking horsemen his father had gathered to leave him had a trick of halting at critical moments to fire a volley from their dragons. And not only that, but when finally started, they rode in open order, "individual riders caracoling before the enemy's front, firing at him, trying to evade his bullets by pirouetting, rearing, and executing all kinds of artful mediæval manœuvres."

At Mollwitz these gallant exponents of the high school of horsemanship were overthrown by the Austrian dragoons, and Frederick, flying from his first field, determined to make an end of them.

"These things must change, or the devil will take you," he said in his downright way, and again, "Your service is such that I

must demand more of a lieutenant of cavalry than from a major of infantry"—a striking way of stating a decently sober fact.

He told his officers that he expected them to lead their men at charging pace when they advanced, and to do nothing else under pain of court-martial. And not only were they to be always prepared to charge, but to charge over long distances and bad ground at headlong speed and with closed ranks.

There could be no denying the Great King; for albeit as poor a rider as Napoleon, he repeatedly drilled his squadrons in person at the camp of Kuttenberg. And behold, the day came when they galloped over Austrians, Russians and French alike, and from their ranks sprang two wonderful men-at-arms, Seydlitz and Ziethen: the former the greatest cavalier this world ever knew, compared with whom Murat is a vainglorious jockey and Kellermann a happy-go-lucky stable-boy.

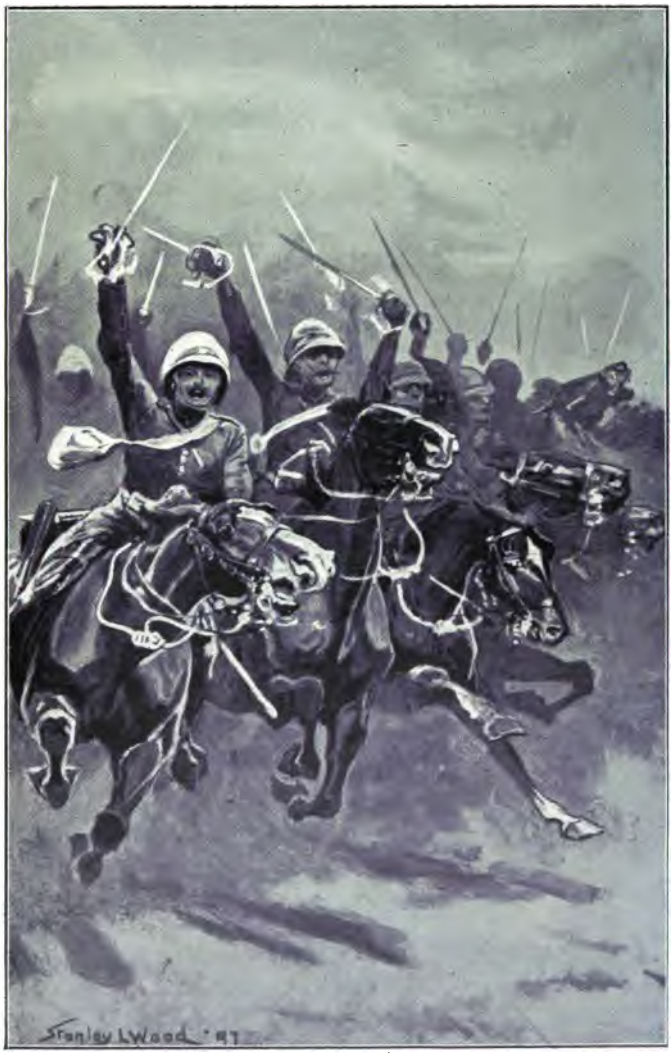
What Seydlitz could not do with his cavalry it may be fairly conceded that no general can do with any cavalry. He formed his squadrons in only two ranks, but he

jammed his men boot to boot so that their charge was the onrush of a solid wall. The common fault of cavalry charging, before Seydlitz's time and since, is the tendency when gaps are made by the enemy's fire to edge away from the bloody hole, with the result of loosened files and a weakened impact. Seydlitz would not hear of such a thing; other troopers might open out, the Great King's must close together. Boot to boot from start to finish!

It was magnificent, and it was war; the war of conquerors.

For the rest Frederick gave them a simple but pure golden rule: "*Nimmer zu halten, nimmer zu stocken, aber immer stets zu attackiren* — Never halt, Never hesitate, but ever and always go at 'em."

But princes and principles alike are fleeting: we find at the commencement of the nineteenth century Murat leading charges at the trot, and cavalry regiments at the halt receiving hostile squadrons with a shower of lead. Nay, in 1854 we find the Russian cavalry in Balaklava valley pulling up to fire their pistols as our heavies galloped towards them,




A CAVALRY CHARGE,
BOOT TO BOOT,
SWORD IN AIR . .

and in 1870 Margueritte's cuirassiers at Sedan announcing their intention to charge by a volley from their carbines.

In Murat's case the reason is not far to seek, although it has been persistently overlooked by historians. Napoleon made such tremendous demands of his cavalry, and spent their force so lavishly, that there was time to train neither men nor remounts properly. If his infantry were not to be trusted in line, much less were his troopers. Murat's squadrons were formed up solidly enough, for he allowed as many ranks as Tilly, but it was the solidity of a pudding instead of a wall, and a gallop such as Seydlitz called for would have shaken it to bits.

Napoleon's squadrons won him many victories, but at an outrageous cost, and they occasionally suffered quite amazing mishaps, as at Eylau, where after eighty squadrons had swept all before them, the cuirassiers were turned topsy-turvy by a few sotnias of Cossacks; who, like the pestilent knaves they were, instead of pursuing this advantage to a military result, proceeded to rob the fallen and don themselves their harness.

It sounds like heresy to say it, but the only certain merit Murat showed as a cavalry leader was his superb impudence: incidentally it may be conceded that his troops were always short of powder and shot, a wise precaution if intentionally taken, but I fear it was only because the gallant General had spent the purchase money on himself.

When his master told Murat to lead his squadrons at any definite object the Marshal went at it fairly, and most often successfully; but if error were possible, it was an even chance he fell into it. When left to himself, as at Gunstett, in 1807 (a few days before Friedland), he bungled atrociously.

At Waterloo the Emperor is said to have called despairfully: "Oh, for one hour of Murat!" and although it would be easy to pass the speech off as one of those vexatiously theatrical demands, which rightly or wrongly have always been put in his mouth on unfortunate occasions, this much may be said: No British square was broken at Waterloo. It is possible that not Murat nor Seydlitz himself could have broken one; but Murat would with his own eyes have

seen the knapsacks of the British infantry, or he would have shut them for ever on their bayonets. A few French cavalry officers did this; but their men did not follow, and all the division leaders left the field safe and sound.

A typical difference between the method of Seydlitz and that of Murat was in their view of the correctness of the leading rank. Murat required it to be mathematically straight, and therefore put his old soldiers in front to keep the alignment, which was just possible at a moderate pace. Seydlitz, admitting perfection of dressing to be desirable, saw that it was secondary to intensity of impact, and therefore put his veterans in the second rank where, even with their swords, they were expected to keep their front files in close order.

Reduced to the simplest form of comparison, Napoleon's cavalry rolled over the field of battle like assorted brazen balls showered forth profusely, and of which the gross weight was enormous, but liable each to be deflected or arrested by mere accidents of terrain or even sundered through their in-

terior jostling. Frederick's cavalry swept forward like steel chains that might be snapped against solid rocks or wasted by blazing furnaces, but would not fail through any weakening of the links.

Murat's horsemen were encouraged to bring on a melée, or hand-to-hand scrimmage, Seydlitz's cavalry were enjoined to avoid it as far as possible; therefore Murat charged at the head of a crowd of fighting men, Seydlitz conducted a well-nigh perfect war machine; the Frenchman sought to cut up his enemy and capture his standards, the Prussian to crush him out of military existence.

There was as great a gap between Murat and Seydlitz as between a tinker and an engineer.

## CHAPTER VI

## Cavalry (*continued*)

IT is to be laid to the credit of our own cavalry leaders of the great wars—Uxbridge and the like—that, however wantonly and stupidly they may occasionally have thrown away valuable lives, they rarely outraged the laws of cavalry action by inopportune recourse to firearms. It is not musketry one wants from a horse soldier.

Nor is it even your superlative swordsman —"the very butcher of a silk button"—who makes the best cavalry man, or (as in this connection individuality is all but lost) the best unit in a squadron; it is your "big man on a big horse," who can sit on that horse under all conditions until it or he dies, and who can guard well enough not to die until he has achieved his general's object, or some one is ready to take his place.

In our old wars with France, when horse met horse on fairly equal terms, where there could be small question of moral superiority on either side, and where the Gallic cavaliers were quite as good riders and far better swordsmen than our troopers, nevertheless they were invariably compelled to give way before the shock of our superior physique, and the greater heaviness of our cattle. Similarly the French cavalry rarely or never broke an English square—a feat commonly performed by the English cavalry against the French infantry.

On the other hand, of the men hurt by the sword in these encounters, a far greater proportion of English died, showing the deadlier skill of the Frenchman with his weapon; and this emphasizes one or two important facts. It is of little moment in battle whether the injury a man receives be slight or fatal, if only it incapacitate him from further share in that particular field. If under normal circumstances one party of horse bear down upon another party with sufficient impetus to overthrow its ranks and materially impair its cohesion, such a success

would be reasonably paid for with a far greater butcher's bill than that of the scattered party; it might be cheaply bought if the cavalry overthrown had covered any important movement or disposition on its flanks or rear.

To win an easy victory cheaply is often good luck; not to hesitate at the price of a most difficult one requires military genius. Indeed it is not, or rather it never should be, the object of a battle to kill the enemy. The true object of a battle is at all costs, short of your own utter destruction, to throw your enemy into such disorder that he must withdraw as best he can. You can then make an execution of him (as Cromwell acutely called it) at your very good pleasure. It is not in fighting the great losses of war occur, it is in running away; and this country has had more than one proof of the fact which she prefers to ignore.

Not, of course, that a cavalry leader may fling his squadrons on all in front of him—horse, foot, and artillery—regardless of the conditions of the combat; but if he feel that he can do something worth doing, something

really great, something by which his country will benefit, let him not count the cost to himself, but send his general word, blow his trumpets, and "ride home." He may never come back, but he will be heard of again, and more often than if he had died in bed.

"Ride home," I say, and to ride home is the rub. It is hard to make the men of our time to do it; cavalry will not always ride home on cavalry, will rarely do so on guns, hardly ever on formed infantry.

Frederick's lieutenant, Seydlitz, was the last and possibly the only leader of horse that rode always home. Even Kellermann, the Heaven-sent angel of Marengo, at Waterloo, could not force his troopers on our squares; Brown Bess with her long bayonet absolutely nullified the gigantic force latent in twenty thousand of the most vaunted cavalry of the time. In honour to a mighty foe be it said that our own victorious squadrons could not shake the last rallying square of the Old Guard retiring slowly in majestic phalanx into the night.

Remember it is not riding home to pull up at the point of the bayonet, wave your

sword, or fire a pistol. To ride home is to gallop on the bayonet point at the greatest speed of which your horse is capable. To do so requires a courage and nerve which civilization does not make more common.

A very pretty exposition of the difference of result between riding home and not riding home occurred at the action to force the defile of Somosierra in 1808. It is thus described by a French officer who was present. "The Spaniards had crowded their position with batteries at successive elevations commanding all the portions of the road that could be traversed; clouds of skirmishers lay in wait to right and left of the ravine, and masses of infantry covered the accessible spots of the heights. As soon as an advance along the road was attempted, the fire of guns and musketry commenced, then there was a profound silence as soon as a movement in retreat had placed the assailants in shelter.

"The Emperor was at the foot of this mountain at the entrance of the gorge; a hundred paces further and he would have been under the fire of the first battery,

which was protected by a breastwork and flanked by riflemen, and had two broken bridges before it. The Emperor ordered bridges of planks and beams to be instantly flung across the chasms. The sappers performed the duty, but with heavy loss. Then he ordered Colonel Piré, aide-de-camp to the Prince of Neufchatel,* to go and reconnoitre if there was any possibility of a cavalry assault upon the first battery. Piré went off at a gallop, was received by musketry, and returned with a rather scared appearance, crying aloud that it was impossible. The speech and the manner of its delivery so enraged the Emperor that he lashed at M. de Piré with his whip, and the blow was narrowly escaped by a hasty retreat.

"There were no troops on the spot but the chasseurs and Polish lancers of the Guard, with a couple of batteries, two regiments of infantry, and our division of dragoons. The Emperor ordered the chasseurs of the Guard to charge the first battery. They went off

* Better known as Berthier, the man of whom Napoleon said that he was the best possible chief of staff, and the worst possible general.—F.C.N.

at a gallop in column of fours, with their usual determination, but the moment they were unmasked by turning the flank of the mountain that covered us, the cannonade and musketry commenced with such violence that they retired in great disorder, thus confirming Colonel Piré's opinion. Then the colonel of Polish lancers came to the Emperor and applied to him for permission to attempt a charge; this was granted, and in a few minutes the battery was carried, but with sensible loss. M. de Ségur, who had joined the charge, *en amateur*, fell pierced with five bullets; the neighbourhood of the battery was strewn with men and horses. There was one horse with his forequarters within the battery, while his hind legs hung without; his rider was stretched dead within the middle of the battery." A bloody triumph no doubt, but the lancers who pushed home suffered hardly worse than the chasseurs who turned back; and while the latter gave the enemy only the moral advantage of a successful repulse, the lancers, by overthrowing this one battery with such dash, brought about the withdrawal of them all, and the day was

won. Even if there were not one unwounded trooper among these lancers of the Guard, Napoleon had won a cheap victory.

It is typical of Napoleon's way of doing things that a few days later he sent Colonel Piré, the incautious staff officer, to ride round the walls of Madrid, for no purpose whatever, unless to have him killed, which was, I believe, fulfilled.

The day when cavalry could be relied upon to ride knee to knee on unshaken and undemoralised infantry is gone for ever; so far back as one hundred and forty years ago Voltaire prophesied its end. Not that troopers will never charge formed infantry, only they cannot be depended upon to overturn it, but only to impede its advance by forcing it to close its skirmishing line up to the centre, presenting a more accessible mark for artillery.

It is true that the official *Infantry Drill* lays it down that "On open ground a footsoldier has nothing to fear from a single trooper, and that on broken ground the advantage is on his side, provided he remains calm and collected." Scarcely need it be

said that the average young soldier does not remain calm and collected at the sight of a horseman pricking down on him with lance point dropped to the engage; if his fellows are near he edges up to them, if alone he incontinently looses off his rifle and runs, or, standing, waggles his bayonet in front of him by way of guard. The moral advantage is entirely with the mounted man, and, unless the infantry man can shoot him down ere he can close, it seems that the physical advantage is with him too; for, after all, if the trooper rides straight at the foot-man, it seems obvious that the latter must be overturned, though he remain ever so "calm and collected."

It is a very pretty question, that of the horse and the bayonet. Time was when cavaliers rushed on steel as a detail of the day's work, but as the Napoleonic wars killed off the veteran troopers of the great nations, a theory gained ground that horses objected so strongly to the look of steel that they could not be made to face it; and in time their riders felt so sure of this that they did not even attempt to make them do so.

Needless to say, this fantastical idea is a gross imputation on one of the bravest beasts that adorn the earth. A fairly trained war-horse, backed by the veriest tyro who can hold himself and his reins steady, will charge any object mind can conceive if only put fairly at it. No doubt if a horse is walked up to a bayonet and allowed to nose it, the quadruped will not readily consent to impale himself upon it, but let him be galloped at it from any reasonable distance, and, unless checked or thrown out of his stride by the nervous clumsiness of his rider, he will not falter nor fail. It is not the charger whose rider lies slain behind that shirks the collision, but the unhappy mount of the sentimentalist who is thinking of his mother instead of concentrating his mind on the business in hand.

Therein is the difficulty of all war: military science cannot be considered exact, for its tactics are affected by the feebleness of humanity, as is its strategy by the complexity of politics. Nor is a captain to be so fairly judged by the things he has achieved, as by the means with which he

achieved them. Had the Crown Prince of Greece possessed the genius of Alexander, the issue of the late war would have been the same. It is only doubtful that Alexander would have engaged in it.

Once for all it may be accepted as proven that, granting equality in skill and determination of both parties, the average cavalier steel to steel with the average *fantassin* is his military superior by at very least as much as the gross weight of horse and rider exceeds that of the man on foot. If, on the other hand, the personal conditions are the same, but the cavalier has a thousand yards of open ground to traverse and the *fantassin* his magazine full of cartridges, the odds against the horseman are incalculably great.

And yet it may so fall out, again and again, that the mere bayonet will baffle the dragoon, and the prancing charger scare the rifleman out of his senses. There can be no certain knowledge of what even the bravest and steadiest man will do at a certain moment, and that is why it is easier to foretell the result of a war than of a battle.

Lord Wolseley himself, who presumably

approves the statement in *Infantry Drill*, that the foot-soldier has nothing to fear from the man on horseback, has also said non-officially: "I have witnessed more than once the dread entertained by good infantry for cavalry. Let there be the slightest suspicion of cavalry charging, let but a few horsemen show themselves in the vicinity, and I have always found it have a most unsteadying effect upon the men."

I have said that it is becoming more and more difficult to make cavalry charge home against infantry—here is the converse of the proposition:—

Although it has been demonstrated over and over again on the field of action that cavalry approaching from any distance cannot live in the face of steady rifle fire, yet the sheer impression of terror sprung from the flashing steel and thundering hoofs has many times inspired raw infantry with the grossest pusillanimity. In the opening engagements of the Franco-German war, ere the Teuton foot had been blooded, "shot over," and generally encouraged by success, they more than once got out of hand on the



THE 13TH BENGAL LANCERS
BREAKING UP THE ENEMY
AT TEL-EL-KEBIR . . . .

approach of the French horse; and, even as late as Gravelotte, an alarm of cavalry flung into momentary panic the *élite* of the Prussian battalions. The advance of our own divisions at the Alma was considerably hampered by an unconscionable apprehension of cavalry on the part of commanding officers who were old enough to have known better.

The plain truth of the matter can only be that it is the natural instinct of humanity to turn tail when suddenly threatened by a danger appealing strongly to the imagination; and in the onrush of armed squadrons, flying over the ground at from fifteen to twenty miles an hour, there is, to the average man, something of the effect of an appalling primitive force let loose against him. In fine, paradoxical as it may seem, the more scientific we grow, the more accurate our firearms become, in short, the more impossible it is for cavalry to charge infantry without unthinkable loss, the more difficult it is to train infantry to coolness and steadiness under a cavalry onslaught. Even at Balaklava Sir Colin Campbell's "thin red

line" of Highlanders, armed with the best fire-lock of their day, did no more against indifferent Russian horse than the Duke of York's archers at Agincourt in the face of the first chivalry of France.

Still, although it be morally certain that great cavalry leaders will yet deliberately call upon their sabres to do it, it is well to remember that one of the rarest occurrences in modern warfare is for cavalry to advance against formed infantry in pitched battle. And on these occasions justification is sought on the plea that is always just—necessity. Such necessity as sent the 8th and 9th French Cuirassiers charging, albeit in bloody shot-riven fragments, up the streets of Morsbronn on the 11th August, 1870, and started Von Bredow on his never-to-be-forgotten *Todten Ritt* five days later at Rezonville. Both these truly splendid exploits resulted in the practically complete destruction of their undertakers, *but they were successful.* The French horsemen gave their lives to save their whole army from capture; the Prussian horsemen were so long a-dying that they held the enemy in check while their

own infantry marched up from many miles away. Such another attempt was made on September 2nd, at Sedan, when Margueritte's Lancers and Turcos tried to fling themselves on the Bavarian infantry across the plateau of Floing. But they fell in a hopeless cause; save for the difficulty of passing the Arab stallions in their death throes, the Germans suffered not at all.

I say cavalry will not attack formed infantry in the battles to come, but it is very doubtful (as we shall presently see) whether in these same battles the infantry will be, in the drill sense, formed at all. Twenty foot-soldiers, armed with magazine rifles and bayonets, locked in a rallying square, would be a hard nut for a whole squadron of horse to crack; but a field battery anywhere within sight could delete such a group at one blast, and hostile rifle bullets would drive through several bodies pressed so close together: consequently infantry officers will not throw their men into knots or encourage shouldering of any kind so long as they dare keep open order. There is the chance of the trooper: once dashed in at the flank of a

skirmishing line, the business before him is almost one of heads and posts.

Peradventure he stands a strong chance of being killed, but not before he has realized his full military value. No doubt the arm with which cavalry will have most frequently to contend will be their own. Thus squadrons bearing down on the flanks of infantry skirmishers may always themselves be taken in flank by the squadrons protecting the skirmishers; and their own line of supports again taking their assailants in flank, a cavalry *mêlée* might well ensue where only an affair of sword *versus* bayonet had been looked for.

It will be chiefly in the pure combat of cavalry that the Horse Artillery shall have its best opportunity, although it is likely in the battles of the future that it will be called from the firing line instead of the reserve to seize it. A horse battery attached to a cavalry brigade approaching hostile squadrons would not, or should not, follow in its tracks, but move off at such an angle as would permit it to rake the enemy's flank, if they attack the horsemen, or compel them to

turn their flank to the horsemen, if they attack the battery.

Probably the enemy's guns will be pursuing a somewhat similar manœuvre, but in no case should the hostile batteries engage each other; this is a cavalry action, and the batteries are not present as personal enemies but as auxiliaries to the principals. There will be no serious fear of the cavalry attacking the guns until they have overthrown the other horsemen first, for while the guns may harass them desperately, only horsemen can smash them utterly; and should their horsemen be overthrown, the battery must not withdraw but cover their retirement as far as possible. After squadrons have galloped across the front of a battery and overthrown their own arm, if they have encountered any real resistance they will not be in good trim for reforming and then charging a battery which has got their range and means to fight, and has not so far lost one man.

Thus, the normal duty of cavalry on the field of battle is to seek out and overthrow the hostile cavalry; to threaten, and, if possible, capture or cut up all ill-supported

batteries; to attack any troops open to surprise or much shaken by fire—particularly if ploughed by artillery. Finally, in victory, to press on and turn retreat into rout; in defeat, to hold back and at all costs cover the retirement of slower-moving arms.

As cavalry is a non-effective arm save when charging, or within blade's length of the foe, it is naturally screened as much as possible when not engaged; though it must not be so far away that a ten minutes' trot may not bring it within scope of action. More than one cavalry attack has failed through the horses' staleness after a prolonged advance at speed. However contemptible be the object charged, it should be strong enough to resist riders on horses blown by a three thousand yards' gallop. A trooper on an exhausted animal is worse off than on foot, and a squadron in such predicament would be at the mercy of a handful of riflemen. Let us admit that it may be possible for them to return the fire with their carbines; but to do so at all effectively they must dismount, and dismounted troopers are, in a military sense, no longer cavalry;

just as gunners using their small arms and handspikes have ceased to be artillery.

Horsemen who, through incapacity or exhaustion, cannot charge, are not, for the moment, cavalry, but merely mounted individuals; and, save for what moral effect their presence may obtain on a timid foe, were better off the field.

Erstwhile cavalry attacked in column—that is to say, packed in dense masses with a narrow front; but this formation, which cannot but be considered as unscientific to the extent of viciousness, has long been abandoned by tacticians, not only because of the increasing power of fire-action, but because of its being wasteful in every way; the theory of the depth of the column materially, or at all events proportionately, increasing the force of the shock having been exploded. Now cavalry, coming into the zone of aimed fire, as rapidly as possible wheel into line; and charging, charge in line—perhaps even in lines of single rank, with hundreds of yards between each. It is so they minimise the effect of fire, leave themselves more free to clear obstacles, run less risk of self-inflicted

danger when horses fall, make the most of their numbers, and leave greatest scope for effective and opportune support, while in no sense impairing their physical and moral effect on the enemy.

Charging their kind, they would ride boot to boot, sword in air for a downstroke, and to avoid injury to their comrades or their horses; against guns and infantry, they would loosen the files, and lower their blades to the engage. Cavalry would be *approached* at a more leisurely pace than infantry or guns, but against horse the last hundred yards or so would be covered with the utmost conceivable fury, while against infantry it is possible they might not ride "all out." Always, however, the last phase of the progress should be at excessive speed—otherwise, there can be no adequate shock.

And yet the speed must not be so excessive that the troopers have lost control over their mounts. Cavalry which bolts (as did Murat's squadrons when they were allowed to ride out at all) may give the enemy one tremendous blow by sheer good fortune, but it is sometimes liable to bolt in the wrong direc-



"CHARGING GUNS, CAVALRY LOWER THEIR BLADES TO ENGAGE" . . . . . .

tion, and, at best, it soon spends its strength and is at the complete mercy of the counter attack.

To bolt is perhaps the commonest weakness of heavy cavalry. At Waterloo the "Union Brigade" of Royals, Scots Greys, and Inniskilling Dragoons all virtually bolted —towards the enemy, of course; and although in the earlier stages of their wild career they did an infinity of good service, so far did their frantic flight carry them that they were eventually ridden down and many massacred by a brigade of French lancers, and were of no further use that day. Very much the same fate befell the Life Guards and King's Dragoon Guards charging about the same time; but the Blues, who formed part of this latter brigade, while attacking effectively never got out of hand, and in the sequel were the protection behind which the remnants of the other corps sought safety.

Not only the men were to blame for this disaster, however; Uxbridge, when ordering the charge, gave no definite qualification of the command.

Again, the 12th and 16th Light Dragoons in turn assailing the Lancers drove them down the hill into the valley, beyond which Vandeleur, the brigadier, forbade his men to follow; but the 12th "bolted" up the ascent at the other side, were thrown into disorder by infantry fire, and then ridden over by fresh cavalry, while the 16th, who had stopped in time, regained their position with small loss.

The first line of horsemen having closed with the enemy, the second would be launched at lesser speed to the support; and so on, line after line, until the combat was lost or won. In the words of Jomini: "With equally good troops, victory would fall to that side which holds the last squadrons in reserve, and launches them at the proper moment on the flanks of the enemy, when engaged with one's own troops."

A cavalry battle is, like most things in war, a game of beggar-my-neighbour played with blood and iron.

"But," it will no doubt occur to those who honour me with their interest, "if the battle value of cavalry depends so much upon

its size and weight, why should we have in our army so many regiments of hussars, certainly not very big men, and only a handful of dragoons officially classed as heavy?" The reason is to be found in the rarely remembered fact that war is not all battles; indeed, that a deliberate pitched battle, given and accepted on both sides, is a comparatively infrequent incident, although, in the nature of things, few campaigns can be decisive in which none occurs.

In England's last considerable war, that associated with the Crimean campaign, lasting from start to finish twenty-three months, eighteen of which the hostile armies may be said to have passed in each other's presence, there was only one pitched battle—at the Alma, and there no cavalry were notably engaged. Inkerman was a sanguinary chaotic scrimmage between infantry, with a few guns flung into the *mêlée*; Balaklava, notwithstanding the place it deservedly takes in our annals, hardly more than a combat of horse.

Cavalry, often of immense value in action, is always indispensable in those operations

of war which necessarily precede and follow an engagement. When hostilities are declared, it is the cavalry which first comes into contact with the enemy; and, if equal to its work, it should never lose touch of the enemy until the campaign is over.

A generation ago, when a brace of "ubiquitous Uhlans" cantered, cocked pistol in hand, down some village street in France, twenty miles away from their headquarters, and perhaps fifty from where their compatriots where gathered in force, startling the civilians, and imbuing the French pickets with panic, short-memoried people hailed the advent of a new method in war. Even French cavalry leaders called it an innovation, yet never was there general who pushed his horse more persistently ahead than the first Napoleon. Nor indeed were the Uhlans the first cavalry to waken terror in the thriving champaigns of Gaul. I have already quoted Daubigny's malediction on the "Black Horsemen" of the Religious wars; and in 1870 there were old men crying, "Oh, the Uhlans!" who had in childhood screamed, "Oh, the Cossacks!"

When Napoleon was at last forced out of the sphere of European politics there were not many cavalry left in Europe worthy of the name. The British dragoons had shown themselves good men and true, but their number was too inconsiderable to allow of employment on the grand scale; the French troopers had had their last pounding at Waterloo; and there were left of the sabres of the Great King but a handful who had lived to see the day (in 1814) when to charge meant to walk towards the enemy shouting "Houssa!" The Cossacks, though admirably suited to the work of ravaging an enemy's country and harassing his forces (especially his rear), were at all times unreliable, and notably so at critical moments, presenting the same merits and defects as cavalry as Louis Riel's Red Indians did as infantry, except for the latter's stoicism, which, though a Mongol, appears hardly to be a Cossack virtue.

There remains the Austrian cavalry. The strength of the Holy Roman Empire had always lain in the direction of the white arm, and probably Austria, notwithstanding

the havoc made in her armies and very manhood by Napoleon, had still probably the most presentable squadrons in Europe when Napoleon was no more. Certain it is that when she found herself again at war in 1849, 1859, and 1866, her cavalry served her best, and proved themselves always superior to their opponents. In 1866 Prussia, while teaching Austria strategy and infantry tactics, had to learn from her cavalry leading. Says Kraft Prince zu Hohenlohe-Ingelfingen, whose knowledge of war is great, and judgment scarcely fallible, of the battle of König Gratz: "Take away the Austrian cavalry, and their army was lost between 4 and 5 p.m. Take away the Prussian cavalry, and the Austrian cavalry might have turned the fortunes of the day."

The Austrian cavalry is yet more famous for its general campaign work than its actually great prowess in battle. That is because Austria, or rather Hungary, is the home of the light horseman.

In the Seven Years' War, Frederick did not bother himself very greatly about the Austrian heavy cavalry, counting on Seyd-

litz to settle with them; but the hussars, Pandours, and Croat free lances aroused his most vindictive feelings. They gave him no rest. They allowed him no chance to surprise the Austrians; once notoriously they surprised him. In short, they covered their army.

Supposing an army corps to be on the march, each division of it would be covered by a regiment or, as with us, at the very least a squadron of cavalry; and far ahead of all, the farther the better, provided communication be well maintained, would be a whole division of cavalry, with its batteries of horse artillery; and again between this and the enemy would be its pickets, patrols, and vedettes.

For this purpose massive cavaliers are out of place. Heavy dragoon regiments are at all times a terrible burden and expense to keep and feed. When not actually rolling up the enemy, or making him think that it is their intention to do so, they are almost absolutely useless. Not the strongest, greatest-hearted horse can carry a man scaling over twelve stone without panoply

across country, hour after hour, day after day, at such a pace as the work of covering an army demands.

For this cavalry business the suitable horseman is a little hussar on a hardy animal, capable of great endurance rather than exceptionally highly paced; for, although speed is always a thing desirable, it must here be sacrificed to staying power. The winner of a fashionable handicap would be far inferior to an honestly bred hunter as the mount of a cavalry advanced guard.

It is easy to understand that cavalry thrown forward in scouting parties, and without support, in front of an army may often be called on to use their carbines in self-defence. But it is to be remembered that it must be only in self-defence; that they do not fire from the saddle save under extraordinary circumstances; and that dismounted cavalry are, as a rule, feebler than bad infantry, whose tactics they must for the time adopt.

Every Londoner has probably been impressed by the warlike appearance of the Household cavalrymen, who, carbine-heel

on thigh, stand mounted and motionless for the better part of every day under the arched gateway of the Horse Guards; and possibly not one in a thousand has reflected that it would be well-nigh impossible for one of these heroes to discharge his weapon otherwise than at random. And that, not so much because of his charger as on account of his cuirass. Towards the very end of Napoleon's career, when there were few more heavy cavalry who could be relied upon to charge, an order was issued that the cuirassiers, who had formerly carried only sword and pistol, should be re-armed with the carbine in place of the latter, and should do extra foot drill. But immediately after the carbines had been served out they were returned into store again. Save for a few men of abnormal proportions, none of the cuirassiers were able to handle the weapons.

No man encased in steel back and front can be trusted to level a firearm steadily, and to level it short of steadily is to be a greater danger to one's fellows than to the enemy.

The cuirass, of course, would not affect

the efficiency of the trooper in the field, for the excellent reason that he will not wear it there; but there are other grave objections to the use of firearms by cavalry. To mention only the most obvious and unanswerable, the sword and horse are weapons which to be effective must be in rapid motion; the rifle to be of any value must be handled by a man standing still as a rock. The number of men born into the world who are capable of becoming good horsemen and good shots is not sufficient in one generation to establish a cavalry brigade.

There is a growing tendency to think that in future, not cavalry, but mounted infantry should be used for the extreme outposts of an army; and perhaps it would be better for cavalry if this were done, and they were taught to leave firearms severely alone.

The arms of cavalry are the sword, the lance, and, above all, the *horse*. If that last fail him, the trooper is in evil plight; if it serve him, all should be well.

It is no harm to teach a cavalryman to use a carbine; it is better to make him a

master of fence. But, best of all, is it to teach him that, while infantry may drop and glide and wriggle to the attack, it is his duty and his honour to sit straight on his horse and die like a man.

## CHAPTER VII

# Artillery

"VICTORY will be his who understands how to bring unexpectedly into action a great mass of guns," said Napoleon; and because he said it, people forgave the platitude. Any great show of force, whether it be guns, bayonets or sabres, if suddenly and opportunely developed, will settle nine quarrels out of ten. Bruce startled the English from the field of Bannockburn by bringing "unexpectedly into action" a horde of camp followers.

What weight the observation has lies in the fact that artillery suddenly unmasked makes itself felt with greater speed and with more intense moral effect than any other arm. A single field gun slapping off an unanticipated round of blank makes many a tall fellow nervous and uncomfortable; fancy

then the feelings of the weary, soul-harrowed fighting man, when after a creeping, crawling advance for hundreds of yards across bullet-spattered terrain, his brain and heart are cleft by the bellow of a "grand battery" of perhaps three score pieces belching themselves empty on his front or flank, and ploughing his whole visible world with the howling missiles of annihilation!

Fortunately for the other participants in war it is not easy for a general so to concentrate his cannon that an overwhelming number of them can escape the observation of a vigilant enemy until he comes within decisive range.

In the unsophisticated ages of warfare, when the possibilities of artillery were small, and at that misunderstood, it was doubtless a meritorious tactic to anchor guns behind cover before the battle began, and, holding them in silent readiness, tempt the enemy up to the muzzles by feigned retreats of horse and foot, and then opening from all mouths together, pulverise what was within reach at one blow.

Such handling of guns is quite opposed to

the principles of modern tactics. Artillery is the long-range arm, that is to say, its best fighting is to be done at that exact distance from the enemy at which the farthest aimed rifle-fire ceases to be effective. To-day this distance may be roughly stated at 2,000 yards, and it is not likely soon to go beyond this—not because projectiles will not hit with great force at far greater ranges, but because the human eye fails to guide them. A shell can deal with an enemy when found, it cannot look for him.

Cavalry, and in a slightly less degree infantry, always try to come to hand grips with the enemy; usually artillery does not desire too close an acquaintance. Indeed, artillery differs from all other arms in its comparative lack of human qualities. Every phase of the action makes its mark on the feelings of troopers and infantry, but while the fate of kingdoms is decided around him, the gunner, engrossed in his work, pounds steadily away.

Although he be in the midst of flying enemies he takes no prisoners. His task can only be arrested by the order to stand



"DEFEAT SPELLS TRAGEDY
FOR THE ARTILLERYMAN"

fast or to cease fire, the exhaustion of ammunition, the disablement of his gun or himself. Even in a losing battle his work makes him less liable to demoralisation than his fellows of the cavalry or foot.

If victory lie with them, happy are the men of his coat; in the other scale, serious defeat spells tragedy. His gun is his only hope, and once limbered up to retire, he is at the mercy of his foes. An artillery withdrawal is supposed to be made at walking pace; to break into a gallop would be to show panic and court cavalry pursuit, with the attendant consequences of sabred men, hamstrung horses, and wrecked pieces.

In the old days, and even up to the era of the Napoleonic wars, cannon were regarded rather as trophies to be fought for than as a serious component of an army. As siege materials, of course, their value was recognised from the beginning; but in a field campaign, lumbering along with the train, they rarely came into action until the day was fairly gone in favour of one party or the other. They took their ground promiscuously as they found it, and endangered by

their fire many lives beyond those of their opponents.

In fact, Hotspur's "certain lord" had some colour for his objection to villainous saltpetre as handled in his time. It made the battlefield less pretty and more terrible, without guaranteeing great results to them who used it. There were more men frightened by its noise than fell by its discharges, and noise cannot be directed against the enemy alone.

At the end of the seventeenth century, guns light enough to be capable of manœuvre were moved casually about and fired at important individuals, in much the same spirit as crack marksmen now are told to pick off the enemy's officers. A memorable instance of such use of guns was that occasion when, as William of Orange ate his morning meal the day before the battle of the Boyne, two field pieces were trained upon his breakfast table and a couple of six-pound shots lobbed into the middle of the staff, killing the Prince of Hesse's horse and wounding the King.

Even Marlborough's genius failed to make

great use of artillery in the field, and what guns he captured from the enemy were as often as not found parked in the rear of the battle, while their servants were carrying a musket with the fighting line.

At Blenheim, the French artillery is said to have been very well handled; but as the same report, having declared that they had a force of 90 guns, winds up by placing their losses at 120 guns, not to mention 24 mortars, perhaps it is enough to say that some cannon balls were fired during this engagement, and that one shattered Lord Mordaunt's left arm, while another nearly hit the Captain General's charger.

Not until twelve years after Blenheim were cannon officially recognised as an essential part of England's military equipment. In 1716 was organised the Royal Regiment of Artillery, by which name has ever since been known that corps whose motto "Ubique" is the proudest of our empire. The first colonel was Albert Borgard, a Dane by birth, a Prussian by training.

Perhaps the first time when a British general displayed any conception of artillery

tactics was the last on which an English king took the field, namely, at Dettingen, when as the French reserves were giving way, Cumberland galloped the Hanoverian Artillery up through a wood, and with one abrupt salvo routed them utterly.

At Fontenoy the French artillery was fought for all it was worth; but the English Guards, with seven grape-shotted guns in support, forced their way into the batteries and bayonetted all who opposed; nor did they yield an inch of ground till, like wild cats, the Irish Brigade were at their throats and smote them with the steel they loved so well. Never did soldiers better deserve victory than those who followed flustered Cumberland down the hill at Fontenoy. They had succumbed not to their legitimate foes, but to those evils which curse a house divided against itself.

At Plassey, Clive had only eight guns of contemptible power against fifty great ones; the latter, however, were utterly mismanaged, save four served by the French. Two years later, at Minden, the British infantry was accompanied in one of its most splendid

performances by the roar of forty-eight twelve-pounders and four mortars.

The Royalist advance at Bunker's Hill, in 1775, was prepared and supported by a vigorous cannonade; unfortunately, however, when fresh ammunition was pushed up to the fighting line, it was found to be of other calibre than that of the guns engaged. A similar mistake was made with small arms supply within recent years, but, happily, not in face of the enemy.

With the present century, men took more trouble to understand the use of artillery. Napoleon overrated it; yet, curiously enough, perhaps the greatest exploit ever achieved by the arm was that of the Russian and Austrian allies, when on March 24th, 1814, at Fere Champenoise, with a force of 20,000 horse and 128 guns, *and not one foot soldier*, they won a signal victory over nearly 20,000 French infantry with 84 guns, commanded by such men as Marmont and Mortier.

The English artillery of the Peninsular period, although numerically weak, did splendid service; the deeds of such men as Norman Ramsay reaching an Homeric pitch. Yet

hardly had this wonderful young man's life gone out of him that "noisy Sunday" at Mont Saint Jean, when parsimony decreed that most of the life should go out of our artillery too; and in the general reduction of the army following the evacuation of France the Royal Regiment suffered the worst of all.

It was an idiosyncracy of the Iron Duke to belittle in speech, and to injure in fact, the men who had lifted him from obscurity, and in the last two decades of his life our artillery, like the rest of the British army, had become little more than a military expression. When he died a considerable reaction set in—and none too soon—or the Crimean campaign might have ended in a fashion on which it is more healthy than pleasant to think. As things were, for all the energy brought to bear upon the reorganization of the artillery, there were field guns sent out to India in 1857 on carriages bearing date "1815."

England was the last of the Great Powers to adopt the modern breech-loader, and had recently, if she has not to-day, still some

muzzle-loading nine-pounders in service. On the other hand, the standard arm of her horse and field artillery, the twelve-pounder breech-loader was, up to the other day, the best in Europe.

It is an almost completely forgotten fact that the most valuable cannon of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were turned out wood-charcoal smelted, water-mill hammer forged, by Sussex ironmasters in the era when it was yet unknown that the grim metal lay so close to the coal-beds of the North; and one of these worthies, a Master Hogge or Huggett, is credited with the production of the first cast-iron piece.

Before his time cannon were constructed in several long bars held together by hoops, much like a barrel, and were frequently made to open to receive the charge from the rear. And now, after all these years, we are binding the chases of our guns with spiral wire rings, and loading them at the breech.

The breech-loader has every advantage over the muzzle-loader, save for the risk of the breech being improperly closed or its mechanism getting out of order. Its ser-

vants are less exposed, its accuracy is greater, and it can be more rapidly discharged. It has the paramount quality of being able to fire a fairly heavy projectile without itself being of great weight. This has always been the great problem of field artillery, to find a gun capable of pounding the enemy, and not too heavy for manœuvre.

Norman Ramsay's pieces threw a seven-pound round-shot 400 yards with less precision than the field guns, brought into action against the Baggara in 1898, discharged a twelve-pound shrapnel at 3,000 yards. The number of draught horses were no more, the pace on the march, and at the order "Action front," no less. Major May, in his capital book on *Guns and Cavalry*, emphasises the point thus: "If Ross's troop of 1815, that one which gained undying fame during the Peninsular War, were to engage its successor, 'the Chestnut Troop' of our times, we have no doubt that it would be swept away before it could get near enough to put in a round at all."

Guns usually go, or have gone, into action, supplied with three forms of projectile—

common shell, shrapnel shell, and case shot; but common shell is not included in the equipment of the latest field pieces of the British army. The first is used primarily for finding ranges and against works, the second against men and works, the third against men only and at the shortest ranges, being the modern edition of what is better known as "canister." There can be no doubt that the artillery of the future will fight with shrapnel almost altogether; attaching a percussion fuse on the occasions when it has to do common shell work in finding ranges.

The twelve-pound shrapnel shell is a hollow body of forged steel, shaped like an egg, of which the broader end is flattened. The head is of Bessemer steel. Its length may be roughly stated as $8\frac{1}{4}$ ins., and its diameter as about 3 ins. It contains 162 metal balls, usually scattered in the air and falling downwards when the bursting charge is fired by a time fuse, rising upwards from the ground when the percussion fuse is used.

The time fuse is that far more often attached, as among many other less obvious

advantages, there being no retarding force, it naturally distributes the burden over a greater area. Except in the semi-barbarous wars with the Turks, shrapnel has not yet been used in European fields, but its effect has been aptly described by the Matabele warriors, who asked a British gunner how, when too far away for rifle fire, we yet "managed to wrap up our bullets in a blanket and throw it at them." Percussion shrapnel has very little effect if it falls on soft or marshy soil, often burying itself harmlessly in the earth.

The weakness of our present service gun lies in the fact that it is not what is commonly but very vaguely called a "quick firer," whereas the great continental artilleries are armed, or supposed to be armed, with such weapons.

The popular conception of a quick-firing gun is a Maxim, which however is not a gun, but a complicated magazine rifle, mounted on wheels or otherwise, and using small arm ammunition. In a military sense, a quick-firing gun is an ordinary field-service cannon, fitted with brakes, buffers, and other



"HORSE ARTILLERY MUST ALWAYS BE READY TO GALLOP UP IN SUPPORT".

mechanical devices which keep it in its place in spite of the recoil force, and therefore only requiring to be reloaded after each shot, instead of (as obtains at present) being run up and re-directed.

On the march artillery is kept as close up to the front as is compatible with safety from attack before supports can arrive. If battle is to be given, it will halt to allow of its units to be got together, to change its formation from column of route to line of battery column, and to prepare for action. When the commanding officer has chosen his ground and given his directions, the line of guns, each with its wagon a couple of hundred yards behind, will advance quietly by its centre, usually at a smart trot, but if already under serious fire, at the gallop.

The allotted position reached, the guns are unlimbered and swung round, while the limbers retire and the ammunition wagons come up, unless "limber supply" is specially ordered. As soon as the gun trails have touched the ground, No. 1 of each detachment points out the target to No. 4, who sets his sight and lays for elevation. Mean-

while Nos. 2 and 3 put on the wheel shoes, and the former also takes the lanyard from its place, and makes ready to fire.

When the gun is layed, No. 4 holds up his hand. On the order to fire being given by the section commander, who has it directly from his battery commander, and indirectly from the officer commanding the artillery, No. 1 steps clear of the gun and points to the vent of the gun with his right hand. No. 2 hooks the lanyard to the friction tube, and, like the other numbers, stepping clear of the recoil, jerks his body to the right, and fires the gun.

As the gun ceases to recoil, it is, without further order, run up and prepared for action as before, but not reloaded without order from the section commander.

It is an axiom of artillery tactics that, except for purposes of ranging, no gun is to be fired until the whole battery is ready to support it. Guns are rarely discharged simultaneously, but follow each other at rapid yet regular intervals. The commander of the force declares the object which he wishes to attain with the assistance of the

artillery; the commander of the artillery orders the movements by which this object is to be attained, and is generally responsible for the tactics, but does not interfere with the handling of an individual battery unless dissatisfied with its performances.

The first phase of a pitched battle is almost purely a duel between the batteries of the opposing sides, and not until one or the other shows that it is being overmastered can the fight develop.

When the opposing artillery have played their game of long bowls enough to show which can pound harder, the infantry of the attacking, and presumably superior, force will move forward through the battery intervals, and deploy for an advance under cover of the guns. Should they gain ground, the artillery must soon limber up and follow them, else they are endangered, or at least unnerved, by the firing over their heads. Usually now the gunners will be behind the infantry line, but ever and again, perhaps, they may have to press forward, and fight it out shoulder to shoulder with their fellows on foot.

Batteries of horse artillery must not only perform their share of pounding the enemy with the rest of the corps artillery, but must always be ready to quit the firing line and gallop up "hell for leather" in support of the cavalry. The squadrons whose guns get in the first round at a telling range have long odds in their favour, for they have a fair chance—themselves unscathed—to ride home on a staggered enemy.

When the infantry forces the enemy from their position, the artillery must dash forward, and this time relying perforce on limber supply only, let drive at the retreating foe. Should the enemy turn round when strengthened by his supports, and, as may very well happen, play havoc with the infantry disordered by their victory, then the gunners must stick to their pieces, and at all costs cover their withdrawal. It is no dishonour to lose a gun when the last round in the axle-tree pocket has had its say, but it is to bring it out of a lost action while men and munitions enough to fight it remain.

With a force acting on the defensive,

artillery has its best chance. Its position will have been deliberately chosen, and the exact ranges of every object within its scope carefully marked out. All available cover has been turned to the best advantage, the number of men and horses kept in action reduced to a minimum, and the ammunition supply is secured.

Above all, until each battery unmasks, the opposing staff can only guess at its situation. As each unit of the enemy comes within view, the defensive artillery has little to do but pound away at its pleasure; for the hostile batteries, unlimbering under fire, must suffer considerably before they can get the range. The most difficult manœuvre of all war is the first advance of artillery on an enemy in position.

If the enemy, after or during the artillery duel, pushes forward his infantry, then the batteries will gradually turn their attention to them, until, if the position be seriously threatened, every gun is dropping shot on them as quickly as it may be worked. But if the hostile infantry defeat the defensive infantry, and bursting their lines bear down

upon the guns, not all the case shot in Europe, frontally fired, will stop them.

If infantry supports do not arrive, or a dashing squadron leader break in on the attacking flank, the gunners can only crack off a round or two point-blank, and run or surrender as they prefer. To catch up the handspike, clawhammer, and such things, and die game would be in better taste, but what they do once the infantry are on them, is a matter of etiquette, not tactics.

## CHAPTER VIII

# Engineers

NOWADAYS the word engineer suggests to the civilian mind thoughts rather of steamers and auto-motor cars than of war. And verily, except in the Army list, the Royal Engineer is better known as a sapper. Yet, until the last century, the title had a purely military signification, and was applied only to those officers who handled the king's war engines, who built his fortifications, and destroyed his enemies.

Waldivus, William of Normandy's chief engineer, was an historical personage, and Sir Herbert Baron Kitchener of Khartoum, the last sapper to write his name large on our rolls, may be considered of his military issue, as was also, of course, Charles Gordon, of Chatham, China, and the Soudan.

One may call the engineer, like the ghost in *Hamlet*, an old mole who works fast in the ground; but he has other duties to perform, and in our army particularly he is a being of paramount importance. Judged by the standard of competitive examination, the cavalry officer is intellectually at the foot of the scale, the sapper at the head of it. The present Commander-in-chief of the British army, although an infantryman by commission, first drew attention to himself by volunteering for engineer duty during the Crimean war, that crazy epoch when it was held contemptible for an officer to know anything but how to die.

The most obvious distinction between the sapper and the three other combatant members of an army, is that while it is the whole duty of the cavalier, the foot soldier, and the artillerist to destroy, that of the sapper is primarily to build: when his destructive capacity is called into play, it is almost always directed against what his fellow in the hostile camp has constructed. Again, the sapper, unless in personal self-defence, never aims directly at the lives of his op-

ponents: his object is not to kill them, but to rob them of their protection and expose them to the enmity of the other arms. Very often (for example, when a mine is exploded) the sapper does directly cause death; but it is not his business, and he takes no pride in it.

It is not necessary here to enter into the duties of the engineer in time of peace: the reader may rest assured that he works remarkably hard for the not remarkably great remuneration provided by the tax-payer.

In war what he does is this: he constructs landing-stages, he cuts roads, he flings bridges, he makes railways and drives the trains, he lays telegraph wires and he manipulates them, he prepares balloons and he works them. He lays out camping grounds, he drains them and keeps them clean. He arranges water supply, and causes canals to do what is required of them in face of the intentions of their designer. He lets electric light Be. He constructs mines, he fires them, he countermines them. He plans fortresses, he builds them, he attacks them, he defends them, he demolishes them. He does the same for field works. Also he sur-

veys, and again, he is responsible for submarine mines and torpedoes.

There is really only one thing he cannot do for an army, and that is feed it. Perhaps some day, when all that is necessary to human sustenance shall be condensed into pilules, he may be called upon to do that.

In the old days there was no distinction between the engineer and the artillerist; which confusion is to be more easily accounted for when one remembers that guns were possessed of such poor mobility as to be little used on the battle-field, and never in scientific co-operation with the other arms. When a pitched battle was fought, in which any considerable share was to fall to the cannon, a redoubt was constructed on the field, and the pieces placed therein. The building of this redoubt and the working of the guns alike were the duties of one body of men. The battle ended in the capture by one party of the other's works.

This association between gunners and sappers was long-lived, and even in quite recent times the pontoon train was considered to form part of the artillery.

Except that their studies cover somewhat different ground (and that from antagonistic points of view), the engineer and the artillery-man have now little between them.

Consider an army in battle to be as a ship in a storm, then the engineer is its anchor; that which enables it to hold fast, and drift not to destruction. The pomp of strife is not for the engineer; his officers do not wave their swords, his comrades do not cheer as they go forward, nor is his work inspired by the bugle blast. His true weapons are neither ball nor blade; they are the shovel and the pick. It is not for him to lead attacks, he cannot push a battle line forward one poor yard, he can strike no straight blow for victory—his business is the prevention of defeat, protection from unnecessary loss.

Let there be two hostile infantry battalions drawn up in similar formation facing each other on level ground, and a thousand yards dividing them. Granting that they are soldiers of equal training and character, and similarly armed, it is not unreasonable to suppose that opening fire upon one another at the same moment, half an hour later both

sides would be less a great percentage of their effective, and neither be a bit nearer overthrowing the other; but let one of these battalions be entrenched in the earth in such a way that only the men's heads, shoulders, and arms at most are uncovered, and it follows that that battalion will suffer far fewer casualities than the other of which the men are exposed from head to toe. It is true that these latter may save themselves to some extent by lying down, but it must be remembered that that is only protection from the eye, and that once the range is obtained, a man lying down without cover over him or in front of him, is almost as exposed to the flat trajectory of the modern rifle bullet as a man standing up.

It is indeed so very patent that a man in a rifle pit must be stronger than a man not so protected that there are many generals (particularly in the East) whose view of war is completely circumscribed by earthworks, an error even more fatal to armies than the contempt for the sphinx-like art of fortification. Torres Vedras, Sevastopol, Ulm, and Metz are names written in history, almost on

one page of it, but referring to very different events.

Fortifications have for an end the keeping of the assailants at arm's length from the defenders. If they go further, and make it impossible for the defenders to get at the assailants, they are the most treacherous of enemies. Not that the engineers were to be credited with the entire glories connected with the first two names, nor to be at all reproached with the shame of the others.

The strategical value of fortresses does not properly enter into the subject of this book, but much that is true of the great strongholds holds good in a sense of a shelter trench that a company of sappers may throw up in an hour.

Modern fortresses are not built for beaten or cowardly armies to hide in on the chance of the enemy getting bored and going away again. They are defensive positions behind which an army prepares itself to take the offensive.

Similarly field entrenchments are not places for infantry to sit in out of harm's way until the battle is over, but cover

behind which they may economise their resources until the moment comes when the real effort is to be made.

While troops remain behind cover they can gain no end: if they can temporarily stave off defeat that is the most. Even if their fire has repulsed the enemy again and again, and caused him far greater loss than their own, until they leave their cover to advance upon him he will not admit himself beaten; nor is he beaten, in fact, although he may be unable to find enough soldiers for another attack. To be short of men is little more than to be short of cartridges: a general with few troops, or with little ammunition, is liable to be beaten; but he is not beaten through the mere fact of having exhausted his resources.

Supposing, as was common enough in the last century, but unlikely now, that a general commanding an army corps of 30,000 men were so happy as to be able to pick out a defensive position for himself, he would probably look for a suitable expanse of ground which rose gently from the general level of the earth, and faded into it again behind

him. He would seemingly observe with pleasure a river on one flank and a marsh on the other; but before deciding to fight he would make sure that neither of these obstacles found its way into his line of retreat.

Unless he considered himself inferior to his opponent, he would not like the marsh to cross the front of his position, although, if he himself were well provided with pontoons, he might not object to the river doing so.

Clumps of trees in front, flank, or rear of his position, if within gun-shot, he would cause his pioneers to destroy; but solitary trees here and there might be left to mark ranges.

If he thought fit to entrench himself—and Napoleon (who sometimes complained that his generals did not use them enough) has said: "Field works are always useful, never injurious when they are rightly understood" —he would call his Engineer Chief into consultation, and explain to him the presumable nature of the enemy's attack, and how he proposed to meet it.

When the engineer had noted on his

sketch of the ground what part of the defensive line was to be artificially strengthened, then it would be for him to decide what form and nature of works were most suitable for the purpose. And to do that he must know for certain the minimum time available, and, as far as possible, the relative strength of the enemy in artillery and infantry. Defences which would keep rifle bullets out for a day might be knocked into a rubbish heap by a single cannon shell. An ordinary brick wall, loopholed by having the "header" bricks pulled out, would afford considerable protection against infantry fire; it would be disastrous to its defenders if a gun was trained on it, for the hard splinters would scatter in all directions.

And not only should he endeavour to find out how many batteries the enemy has, but the nature of these batteries. An ordinary field gun fires a projectile of from 12 to 15 lbs. weight; this is far more destructive than a seven-pounder mountain gun, but is nothing compared with a forty-pounder gun of position, which latter, however, is not commonly found with field armies.



DRAGGING A FORTY-POUNDER INTO POSITION.

The simplest in design and easiest of construction of all artificial defences intended for a firing line is the shelter trench. It is calculated that the penetration of the modern rifle-bullet into newly-turned earth does not, even at so short a range as 500 yards, exceed two feet, so three feet may be considered absolutely bullet proof. One man with pick and shovel can in half an hour excavate and throw up a piece of trench five feet long, two feet six inches wide, and eighteen inches deep; and this excavated earth being dumped in front of the trench gives a total frontal of three feet, sufficient to protect a man resting on one knee to fire. But this shelter trench would come to grief if bombarded, and would not stop good cavalry, although many squadron leaders might funk close acquaintance with it. An engineer officer would take more pride in the construction of a breastwork, something to avail against not only musketry, but artillery; and this requires his technical supervision, whereas infantry can usually be entrusted with the driving of their own rifle pits.

A breastwork, although also consisting of a trench and mound, is not thrown up so readily; for its proportions are greater, and its outline has to be carefully planned, and then the angles rounded off; also in front of it is dug a ditch. A breastwork thrown out of clay soil, to be reasonably efficacious against the weapons likely to be opposed to it in a modern battle, might be planned somewhat as follows: its "command" or elevation from the level of the earth would be six feet, more or less; its thickness over twelve feet; the ditch in front to be of use should not be less than three feet below the level of the earth, and the trench behind will be about the same depth or less. The actual firing line will not stand, of course, in the trench, but on a berm or cutting about a foot or two deep on the interior slope of the parapet, and dropped about four feet and a half below its crest. The parapet itself, falling steeply on its rear face, in front slopes away gradually towards the enemy; and for better concealment, if time avails, the angle of this slope should be prolonged at the other side of the ditch. The object of this is that



A KRUPP GUN
IN EARTHWORKS,
ALEXANDRIA . .

the whole outline of the work may fade away gently into the terrain, and leave no sharply-defined object for the enemy to range his guns by.

It is impossible without wandering into a maze of technicalities to explain in detail the nature and construction of field works, but it may be said that when two lines of parapet meet each other such an angular work is called a "Redan," if these two lines are prolonged each by another line on the flanks it is a "Lunette," and if these four lines are closed by a fifth drawn across the rear the whole perimeter forms a redoubt or detached work.

In no case would a general whose flanks were guarded by such natural obstacles as we supposed here—namely, a river and a marsh—allow his whole front to be covered by breastworks, nor even would an unbroken line of rifle and gun pits be admissible. To draw a dead wall between himself and the enemy would be to engage in a passive defence, and a passive defence is not war; it is not fighting of any kind, but a moral putting of one's head under the bedclothes while one

kicks out with one's feet. It ends nowhere unless in a long-drawn-out agony of suffocation; never, never, never in success.

The reasonable tactical use of field fortifications is to artifically strengthen one section of the line of defence, so that a few troops may sit tight behind it, while the mass of the army hurled against the weakest part of the enemy's (in the aggregate much stronger) power may break its backbone. Apart from the question of protection from loss, that is why it is essential that field works must be invisible to the enemy as far as concealment is humanly possible. If the enemy knows in which part of the field he will be opposed to works, and in which to active troops, he will manœuvre with certainty to his best advantage.

The most everyday tactical use of field works is to cover one flank almost entirely with works, and leave the other free to attack. At Gravelotte before Metz, on the 18th of August, 1870, the French army under Bazaine occupied a position extending to some seven or eight miles in length, and naturally strong, extremely so on the left,

and defensible even so far as the extreme right. Bazaine had chosen it carefully, and, determined to make the most of it, ordered the already strong left wing to be further strengthened with rifle and gun pits. It was quite obviously his intention to avail himself of this impregnable position of his left to strike out on his right for a way through his enemies. But every one knows the pyramidal fatuity of the French Staff at this time: the best troops were massed behind the entrenchments on the left, the weaker corps sent to the unprotected right.

One German army corps was instructed to attack the formidable left with some show of vigour, but the mass of men were sent to turn the feeble right. In the sequel the French left, with a comparatively small loss, repulsed the German right with tremendous butchery; but their own right giving way at the critical moment, they found their rear threatened, and were compelled to fall back into Metz. That is to say, they abandoned a position of active defence for one of purely passive defence, which they only left again as prisoners of war. On the 17th of Octo-

ber, 1870, three marshals of France, sixty-six generals, six thousand officers, one hundred and seventy-three thousand men laid down their arms, and were sent into dishonourable exile and captivity because on the 18th day of August the part of that force which was victorious could not advance across its earthworks, and the part free to advance was too weak to avoid defeat.

Even Sevastopol, the defence of which, by no means purely passive, was conducted with so much pertinacity, valour, and technical skill as were never perhaps so commingled before, shows the futility of mere defence. The French and British drove the Russian field army to refuge within the walls, which were of too great circumference for the assailants to besiege by the only certain method—investment; they could but sit down and pummel it from one side instead of cutting it off entirely from the world. For over a year this contest dragged its laggard course; the besiegers were almost crushed by cold, famine, and disease, suffering in a sense worse than the besieged; their generals were dullards, and divided in their

dulness; yet in the end Sevastopol fell, or, to be precise, the defenders were compelled to evacuate it, and taking advantage of the paucity of their besiegers' numbers, to steal away on that face of the enceinte where there were no troops to meet them. Had the town been besieged by an army proportioned to its immensity even as adequately so as were the Germans to the bastions of Paris fifteen years later, the whole war would not have lasted a year.

Curiously enough Gravelotte also gives a good example of admirable engineer work during the very throes of battle. When the Prussians had driven the French right out of St. Privat, they set their sappers to build a trench and other strengthening works outside the village. From this they could threaten that part of the French left which still held on in spite of the furious but ill-ordered assault old General Steinmetz had made upon it with the German right. Steinmetz flung horse, foot, and artillery in headlong medley to the frontal attack, entirely disregarding the value of cover in approaching what, save for the absence of great can-

non, might be considered the wall of a fortress. As I have said, he was heavily repulsed, his failure being the greatest disaster the Germans suffered during the war. So egregious was his conduct, and so appalled were the staff by the result, that the late General Sheridan, of the United States Army, who was a guest at the royal headquarters, took it for granted that he would be deprived of his command. But in consideration of his age (he was about 71 at this time) this was not done. A very doubtful piece of charity, which can hardly have recommended itself to either Bismarck or Moltke.

The Russo-Turkish War of 1877 showed many examples of brilliant engineering and trench fighting, but the dispositions of both parties were usually so faulty that one is almost more amazed at the enormity of the tactical blunders than at the immensity of the technical skill.

Roughly speaking, the Turkish fortifications, great and little, were mere ingenious obstructions to keep back the enemy; and striving more and more to make them im-



THE STORMING OF KARS. RUSSO - TURKISH WAR. THE RUSSIAN ATTACK ON THE BREACH . . .

*Reduced from "Battles of the Nineteenth Century." By permission of Cassell & Co., Ltd. . . . . .*

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passable for the latter, and allowing no other thought to enter their heads, they ended by making them impassable for themselves. Plevna was the culmination of this idea. When the second great Russian attack had failed, and the assailants were retiring demoralized and confounded, a strong counter stroke might have won the war for the Ottomans. But Osman could not get his troops to pursue; in technical phrase they were "immobilized"—that is to say, they had no power of concerted movement left in them. They had learned to perfection the art of sharpshooting behind cover; they would not have faced a troop of lancers in the open. In their trenches they would fight to the death; they would not cross them for the glory of this world or the next. They had forgotten how.

The most scientific use of field fortifications is to form a mask behind which a great force may change its front. One army advances with confidence to defeat another one which has stretched a line of fortifications at right angles to its route. The former, making elaborate preparation to carry these

works, is suddenly taken in flank by the latter, which has changed its front by swinging round from behind cover, which still protects one of its flanks while it "refuses" or shoulders off the other. This was a common incident in the American Civil War; but with the enormous multitudes which the Great Powers of Europe will in future call on to decide their quarrels, measures of this kind will be extremely difficult to carry through with the necessary accuracy, particularly in a country which is under cultivation.

While in the past the engineers have done many brilliant things in war, their precise value on the field of battle has not yet been sufficiently demonstrated to be appraised at its exact worth. If the theories of many who have studied war deeply hold water, much of the future of history may be dug out of the ground, and fashioned by ditch, parapet, berm, and trench. At the same time not all the earthworks in the world will save a nation that relies on them only. "Better too few than too many," said Frederick; "for it is not the works that withstand the enemy, but the troops defending them."

Besides the actual cover that he throws up by means of entrenchments, the engineer may be called upon to provide for defences, which, while giving little or no protection from an enemy's fire, delay his advance, and expose him at short ranges to a hail of bullets. Sometimes the ground over which the enemy advances (that is, the long slope of approach technically known as the "glacis") may be mined; but this is rarely done where the defence is not intended to be purely passive. The mine is almost entirely used in the defence of permanent fortifications; particularly they may be placed across a salient angle, which the fire of the fortress cannot sweep, and where none but an enemy will come. Such a mine is made by digging a suitable sized pit in such a way that the mouth inclines in the direction of the enemy. So many pounds of powder are buried in a box at the bottom of the excavation, and a stout piece of timber is laid over it; then the pit is partially filled up with stones, bricks, or any hard and heavy rubbish, calculating one hundredweight of projectile for every pound of

charge. A common mine or fougass might weigh about five tons, and it would be fired from the main line of defence either by electricity or a powder hose.

The other obstacles used in war are purely obstructive, unless one excepts crows' feet—three-pronged iron spikes, which, scattered over the ground, are invisible at any distance, and will hopelessly lame horses. But they again are not likely to be used in the field unless under very exceptional purposes.

The obstacle most frequently cropping up during the recent campaign in Cuba seems to have been the "wire entanglement." Of this there are two kinds, the high and low. The high, a variety of which was the one used in Cuba, is an arrangement of stakes driven into the ground at intervals of a few feet from one another, and connected in all directions by wires, of which the topmost should be nearly five feet above the ground. Low wire entanglement, which is a less complicated arrangement of the same nature, would stand on short stakes, only about eighteen inches high. This latter would throw cavalry into hopeless confusion, but

would have very little effect on an infantry advance. Infantry would be considerably annoyed by the higher obstacle, as, unless there are well trained pioneers at hand to deal with it, rifles must be laid aside at the most critical moment, and men whose blood is at battle heat may feel their hearts falling into their stomachs while they struggle with the cunningly disposed coils.

Yes, the wire entanglement is a fine thing to bother your enemy advancing upon you. But, after all, in nine cases out of ten it is not worth the labour of construction; for if your enemy is really bent on getting at you, it will hardly stop him; and if it does stop him, it will certainly also stop you when you seek to pursue him. And so it is with all obstacles: they give some trifling additional protection from the enemy, but more often than not this advantage is outweighed by the feeling of false security which they arouse in the minds of those behind them.

The mind of the average common soldier is essentially childish. "At the other side of the hedge," he thinks, "is the enemy's ground and danger. This side of the hedge

is my ground and safe. I will not leave this side if I can help it." He forgets that the whole theatre of war, the whole areas of the two countries at war, go together to make Tom Tiddler's ground, and that the only place which is safe is that held by the party which at the point of contact is stronger than the other. Stronger, not by virtue of the accidents of the ground, but by the genius of its leader, the ability of the officers, and the skilled valour of the rank and file.

## CHAPTER IX

# Infantry

WHEN all is said that can be said, the men on foot remain the greatest thing in war; they are the vertebræ in the spine of battle, and without them the other arms are as trunkless limbs. The black guns may spit at each other, and the glittering squadrons crash together; but it is the volley firing at five hundred yards that beggars treasuries and alters maps. Just possibly a decisive campaign may be fought without cavalry and artillery; without infantry it is inconceivable.

The lightest gun that mules or men ever carried to a mountain top is useless, and even dangerous, if cramped in too strait a place. Cavalry notoriously must choose their ground, and choose carefully; but where men may go, there infantry can fight.

The trooper must sit in his saddle, the gunner stand by his piece, but the infanterist can play his part on his feet, or his knees, or flat on the ground; he can kill his man from the fighting-top of a ship or the depths of an armchair. Artillery may smite from afar, and horsemen slay with cold steel, but the foot soldier, if he cannot make himself felt at such great range, nor strike so hard when near, can battle from a distance and at arm's length with an uniformity of power no other arm possesses. Infantry are far less difficult to train, to equip, and to feed, than troopers or gunners, and although naturally they exhaust more ammunition than cavalry, the difficulty of supplying their wants is infinitesimal compared with that attending the action of artillery.

They cannot move as rapidly as guns or horse, but neither are they so exposed when in motion, and surprise cannot find them so defenceless as it would the mounted arms. And on the sheer question of mobility it is seriously claimed that in a long campaign the men on foot will eventually outmarch their equestrian brethren.

Artillery dare not face them for long alone, cavalry cannot destroy them but at the cost of their own destruction—a price only heroes will pay. Artificial obstacles may hinder, but cannot hold them permanently, unless defended by men as good as they, and in something like proportionate numbers.

Finally, it is of her infantry that Britain has most reason to be proud, whether they carried bill-hooks at Senlac, halberds at Lincoln, bows and pikes at Creçy, harquebuses and pikes at Zutphen, muskets and pikes at Landen, muskets and bayonets at Minden, or rifles and bayonets at Inkerman. There is something in the English temperament particularly fitted to the slow, grim fighting of infantry, with its relentless advance and its obstinate holding fast when checked.

Apart from his physique, the Britisher has no particular qualification as a cavalier, and he lacks the quick intelligence of the born artilleryman; but give him a rifle and a bayonet, and let him have two years' training to make a man of him, two more to turn him into a soldier, and yet two more to remind him that he cannot be one without

the other. If at the end of these six years, forty score of him cannot face a thousand of the best foot Europe can produce, then is the prowess of the British infantry sadly fallen since the November day, five-and-forty years ago, when the "Die Hards" proved themselves the same regiment, if not the same individuals that saved Beresford a court-martial and won him a peerage on the "fatal hill" of Albuera.

But greatly, very greatly, has the character of infantry fighting changed within the past forty years, and a smart young staff officer of to-day would think it certain catastrophe to follow in battle a general bred in the traditions of Colin Campbell. And not without some reason, for what that worthy soldier would have damned as unsteadiness, is to-day accepted as unavoidable.

The breechloader long since robbed the fighting line of its rigidity, the magazine has taken from it its precision.

The man whose mental picture of war is coloured with the steel and scarlet pigments of Napier and Kinglake would look in vain for the meaning of a modern action between



"INFANTRY NOW COME INTO ACTION AS IF BEGGING GRACE" . .

civilized powers. Here are no dashing bayonet charges, no iron-rimmed squares. Plenty of hubbub there will be, for as men become less warlike, war grows noisier; the ripping chirp of the pattering rifles, and the throb, throb, throb, of the guns, followed by the outrageous brattle of exploding shells. But his eye shall not be so impressed as his ear, for although the combat may not, as in olden time, be canopied in smoke, yet so immense, intricate and far-reaching will be the scale of operations, that each individual hero must play his prowess lost in the throngs of nobodies strung on the cord of discipline.

Infantry now come into action rather as if they were begging grace of their opponents than as seeking to encompass their destruction.

The weapons of the infantryman are the rifle and the bayonet. The arm supplied to our troops, and known as the Lee-Metford Rifle, Mark II., is a little over 4 ft. long, with sword-bayonet fixed, 5 ft. 1½ ins., and weighs, all told, over 10 lb. The magazine attachment, which is cut off by a mechanical contrivance not supposed to be opened, save

when rapidity of fire becomes essential, holds ten cartridges, rising, when not cut off, into the chamber, each in turn, as the rifle is discharged. The rifles of certain Continental armies have no mechanism for shutting off the magazine; this, one cannot but think, must lead to great waste of ammunition; for the best fire discipline has over and over again failed to control soldiers when the nervousness of battle has seized them.

The rifle is sighted up to 2,800 yards, and the bullet has man-killing penetration at over that range, but small arms fire is not a serious tactical element at more than a mile; 1,500 yards is the extreme range laid down in the Infantry Drill Book for aimed rifle fighting. Troops acting on the defensive will usually open fire sooner than those moving to the attack, for the very good reason that, having chosen their position, and acquainted themselves with the ranges, their waste is comparatively limited; and even if it were not so, they can better afford it, having their reserve ammunition close at hand. The offensive troops must rely almost entirely on what they can carry, for the sup-

plies pushed up to a hard bitten fighting line are necessarily meagre.

Although in column of march the main body of the infantry would usually find itself behind the horse and guns, at night the foot must be pushed to the front to supply the outposts, the artillery being left entirely in the rear as useless and incapable of defending itself in the darkness, unless, indeed, units of it be told off to cover bridges and defiles, where its sweeping fire is always valuable, and cannot well be misdirected.

The cavalry pickets and vedettes are not always available for, and are frequently unsuitable to, night watches; so it may come to pass that sentries thrown forward by the infantry outposts will be the foremost individuals of the whole army. Should the march be resumed at daybreak, the pickets will hold their ground until the main body has passed through, when they rejoin their regiments; otherwise they are relieved about dawn.

Broadly it may be said, that there are two ways in which a battle may arise—from the meeting of two armies on the march, or from

the deliberate advance of one army upon a position taken up and defended by the other; but almost always a fight resolves itself into the attack of the ostensibly stronger party upon the weaker, and should this fail, the counter attack of the party which has successfully defended itself.

The cavalry having found the enemy, and the artillery brought him to action, the infantryman girds for the fray, and the forward movement begins. No broad phalanx of bayonets advances on the foe. Here and there along the whole of the enemy's position straggling knots of men run forward, seeking cover as they go, and very loth to draw attention to themselves by prematurely loosing off a round.

The paltry groups of riflemen are the first line of the infantry attack. They go to seek the enemy's weak places, and it is their business to push on, feeling and feeling until they find it. It is on the results of their skirmishing that the general bases his plan of attack.

Naturally work of this kind costs lives, and a continual supply of men has to be dribbled out from the supports to the firing line.

When the general has made up his mind as to the direction of his attack, the artillery as soon as it has demonstrated a marked superiority to that of the enemy, by silencing his most important batteries, is ordered to shell, and at least temporarily shake, the enemy at the chosen point of contact; and although there may be few movements of batteries the fire of all available will be so directed to this end. That done, the men on foot are called up in their might to clinch the argument with lead and steel.

More little parties double out, and take their first firing ground, in support of those which went before. They are the reserves of the first line, which, checked by the enemy, has sought all reasonable cover some few hundred yards off their journey's end.

While this scattered first line is holding fast, and threatening the enemy at all weak points, the second line is assembled in comparatively close formation, opposite the spot on which the real assault is to be made.

Presently the batteries get ready to follow, the covering horse trot up on the flanks, and

the infantry of the grand attack break into long, shallow waves.

And now the temperature of battle leaps to fever heat.

On go the men on foot in quick time, brisking up to the double when coming within sweep of the enemy's fire zone. If this prove heavy enough to check them for more than an instant, down they plump on the ground and open fire while the guns come up, never counting the cost to themselves, to baste the enemy with flaming shell. Unless the attack is entirely overmatched, this acquisition to its fighting power should send it on another few score yards without a halt. When checked again, the guns come up again, and so it goes until the second line is almost on the first.

When they have reached this point, they are receiving a constant flood of supports, to make up for their now very constant casualties. Posses of men are incessantly launched into the fight, and the second line makes ready for the final rush, covered by the magazine fire of the troops in front.

The feeding of a battle can no more be



60TH RIFLES AT KINDJI OSMAN.
"COMING WITHIN THE ENEMY'S ZONE, THEY DOUBLE". . . .

done by the indiscriminate launching of fresh troops into the fray, than a fire may be kept alight by the haphazard heaping on of coals and wood. Every battalion, every company, I am tempted to say, every file must be aimed at its proper mark. Lateral movement under fire is almost an impossibility, therefore the foremost line is composed of many sections of different companies, each nourished from its own company.

Bayonets are fixed by alternate sections, so that the fire may not slacken at all points at once, and as suddenly as possible the troops leap to their feet.

Their guns give them one bellowing "God speed," and while the echo answers, the drums and bugles sing above it. For, cheering as only in battle can man cheer, they rush headlong through their first line, which rises to follow them, and all go for the enemy hand to hand.

It is not unlikely that the enemy will now retire, for unless heavily reinforced, his position is clearly untenable. But first his cavalry, if properly led, will come down to take the infantry attack in flank; and if the

horsemen can get among the disordered foot, they should make most bloody havoc. This it is the business of the cavalry supporting the advance to prevent. Infantry attacking a frontal position at all strenuously defended cannot well be responsible for the safety of their own flanks, though it is often asked of them. All dash goes out of an onslaught if the makers have to look two ways at once.

Supposing the enemy's cavalry counter attack to fail, or be too weakly pressed home, to prevent the advance reaching its objective, the enemy's position becomes a mere *abattoir* for the slaying of men; the technical interest shifts back to where the third line of attack is advancing with closed ranks and steady though rapid step to make a clean sweep of all that stands up before them. If they once join their fellows in the position whence the enemy has been expelled, the latter's hope of regaining it shall be practically gone; so it is not unlikely that the hostile staff is collecting every available battalion and battery to fling upon this ground.

Here the crisis of the battle will be fought out at comparatively short range, and here

no general or even field-officer is of avail, for on the company commanders, or, it may be, the sergeants and corporals with their squads of men, the brunt of responsibility devolves. Here a hundred thousand Homeric combats may take place, and the world not be a whit the wiser, for here the infantryman's whole duty is to sell his life dearly with little hope of notice, much less reward.

No reserve ammunition can reach him in this locked struggle, and before very long it comes to bayonet and butt fighting as of old, and for a little time at least the strong man has his chance against the taught one.

Sooner or later, however, the better men must shake themselves free from the failing grip, and drive the feebler before them. Then as the shaken enemy turns to retreat, the conquering guns scorch him with their fire, and chasing horsemen carve him to birds' meat, and the victorious infantry, at last receiving their supplies, empty volley after volley into the disordered host.

That is the infantry fight of the future as I fancy it will be, and as, if I am not deceived, the soldiers of most countries believe

it will be. But Mr. Bloch will have none of it; to begin with, he holds that the bayonet will never be used again. He admits that the leading military authority of his own country—General Dragomirov—swears by it, but he pooh-poohs General Dragomirov as a fossil. Mr. Bloch holds that the bayonet cannot be of any use, as battles will be decided at ranges which make it impossible, and adduces in proof that in '70–71 the German death losses by cold steel were only one per cent. He observes that the French losses were higher, but sees no moral in the fact.

The kernel of the nut Mr. Bloch has failed to crack is this: if two armies stood firing at each other all day neither would give way, even though one knew itself to be suffering more than the other. The reason that the weaker side does not retreat is that by turning its back it will necessarily expose itself to greater loss, since it thus becomes a mere passive target. Therefore the superior force has gained nothing until it advances to drive the other side away. Now troops advancing invariably suffer more than troops standing *still*; therefore the defensive troops are en-

couraged to redouble their efforts and annihilate their assailants at easy range. The fire of the defence becomes more destructive every moment, while that of the assailants is shaken by their losses, but at last a sufficiently thick firing line of the latter get within point blank of the defenders, and the latter see many more soldiers crowding up behind. The defenders do not feel themselves beaten yet, but they know their assailants' fire is again growing equal, and more than equal, to their own. Suddenly the enemy fixes bayonets and his bugles sound the charge; the defenders have stood still beneath his fire all day, they have seen their comrades scattered on all sides by the deadly but invisible tap of the rifle bullet, they have been strengthened by the merry riot of their own guns against the appalling blast of the shrapnel, but now the enemy has ceased his noise. He is a great bully; they were not afraid of his muskets and guns, they have not so far shrunk from him, but now he is coming to knife them where they stand. They are but stricken game awaiting the *coup de grace.*

A few among the defenders will not flinch even now; they too fix their bayonets prepared with the bitter heroism of the lost to fight it out. But most men fear certain death worse than questionable dishonour, their nerves crack, and they fly. The fight is over, and the bayonet, if it has not drunk a drop of blood, has not the less directly ended it.

Of the tactics of infantry there is no end, but there are some simple rules for the individual foot soldier to remember when lost in the chaos of battle. If you cannot bayonet your enemy, shoot him; if he goes away, aim at the base of his spine. But do not let your attention be distracted from business by the consideration that other people are making a mark of you. It is your duty to kill the highest possible number of those opposed to you, not to save your own skin.

The soldier who, whether through past negligence or present pusillanimity, fails to injure the enemy, is not only a traitor to his country, but a foe to society at large, inasmuch as he obtains a living by fraudulent pretences.

## CHAPTER X

# The Servants of War

FOR an army to keep the field, even a little while, a constant and heavy traffic must pass between it and the place from which it came. From base to front must pour unceasingly the foods of life and death, bread and bullets; from front to base the tides bring back the waste of war, the sick and wounded, or it may be the foreign prisoners.

In Cæsar's day these considerations, if they obtained at all, were very trifling; he did not handle great masses, so his men could usually pick a living as they marched along; swords and spears asked only to be wiped clean, and ground on occasion against a stone; in the uncommon event of a soldier being disabled but not slain, he was left to get well at his good pleasure; and as for

prisoners, they were only taken when their presence was wanted to adorn a triumph. Mightily serious problems of modern war however are supply of an army in the field and the care of its wounded. In the campaigns of Britain in sterile countries against savage enemies, these features assume especial importance.

Formerly only the importation of exclusively military stores was considered necessary in a civilized theatre of war; an officer or board of officers being appointed to treat with the inhabitants for the provision of food, with power to enforce their demands if there was hesitation in complying with them. And it may be remarked in this connexion that even military stores were frequently supplied by civil contract, sometimes this custom leading to really amazing anomalies, as when Napoleon had, by the Continental system, closed every port in Western Europe against England, his own soldiers were clothed and shod in English goods smuggled by his own connivance through the hands of his own Customs officers.

But while to-day, no doubt, the local sources of supply will still be drained dry, the multitudes of soldiers which, on an European rupture, would crowd to certain points of the Continent, would speedily lay their surrounding neighbourhood as bare as if the locusts had passed over it. And they would still hunger for ever.

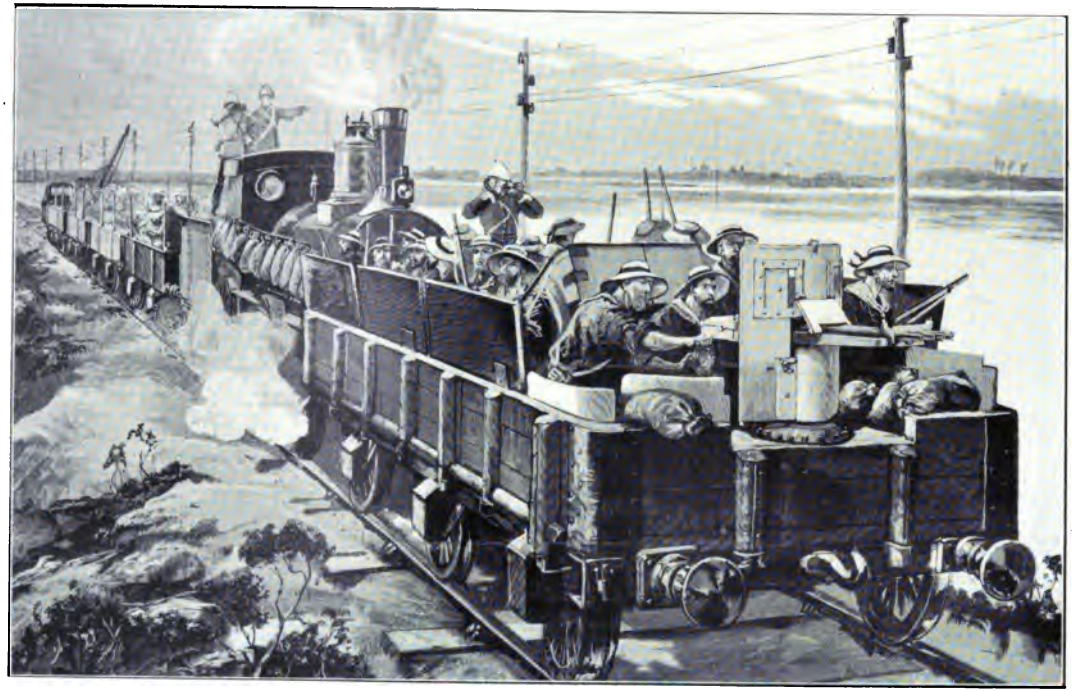
Naturally, in a military sense, it is far more important that an efficient soldier shall be kept efficient by the proper supply of food and clothing than that a disabled soldier should have his comfort seen to; for while the condition of the latter is important only to himself and his friends, the state of the former is a matter for the whole of the people whom he is paid to defend. It is better that all the wounded should be left to die where they fall, than that troops in action at a decisive point should be short for five minutes of ammunition.

The food supply of an army is in the hands of a special department which, so far as Britain is concerned, was until very recent times a civil one, although it is now reorganized on a military basis. It has

had many names, several of them abusive; just at present it is called the Army Service Corps, and its headquarters are at Woolwich. It is responsible in peace time for the supply of rations to all the more important garrisons in England and Ireland, and for cartage of military stores of every description, except of course artillery material. In war its duties would be the same, only enormously extended; for it would have to take in hand the organization of the civil transport service: the government vehicles and draught cattle, being insufficient in number even on the peace establishment, would be a drop in the bucket compared with the requirements of a serious campaign.

The ammunition is provided by the Ordnance department.

We may suppose that a British infantryman, going into action on the line of the Meuse and Sambre, to maintain the neutrality of Belgium against the French, would carry, as well as his field kit, twenty rounds of ammunition in the valise on his back and forty in each of his two pouches attached to his waistbelt. In his haversack he would



ARMOURED TRAIN WITH
NORDENFELDT GUN . .
SOUDAN CAMPAIGN, 1882

have the remains of his current ration, and also an "emergency" ration, to be used in case of his being pushed forward out of reach of the ordinary supply, or the latter breaking down. In the regimental, or strictly speaking the battalion transport wagons, two more days' rations would or should be ready for him as well as twenty more rounds of ammunition, and in the four special battalion carts sixty-five more rounds of ammunition. So that every man of the British battalion, going into action as a separate and unsupported unit, can deliver 185 shots, supposing that he is required to do so and is not disabled during the fight. But in practice, of course, more or less serious casualties occur on every side of him, and he has his disabled comrades' pouches to draw on as well as his own. It is particularly desirable that he should do this as far as possible, not merely in order to husband his own resources, but to avoid the risk of their falling into the hands of the enemy. And apart from that, it will rarely happen that all sections of a battalion so engaged will be in the firing line at once, so that those in front can

usually replenish their wants from those in rear. The plea of a company that they are short of ammunition can never excuse a retreat unless from a position in which they had completely lost touch with their fellows.

But very rarely, in the great wars to come, will a battalion be deliberately detached from the main body, so that beyond its personally cared for 185 rounds per rifle, each man can count on seventy-seven more rounds in the ammunition column of his division, and another sixty rounds in the army corps ammunition park, both in charge of the artillery. The supply of ammunition for troops in action is, when practicable, sent forward on mules.

Artillery ammunition is carried in the gun limbers, the axle boxes or pockets, and the separate wagon or limber attached to each gun. The supply in the wagon is invariably used first, that in the gun axle boxes last and only in an emergency; nor should limber supply be touched unless it is necessary to get in a few rounds very quickly.

Very commonly, although there are special

ambulance wagons, the wheeled and other transport used to carry stores to the front on the return journey is pressed into the service of the wounded.

On what we entitle the Army Medical Staff and Army Medical Staff Corps (that is to say the surgeons and their specially trained assistants of all kinds), and the Americans in more business-like fashion call the Sanitary Corps, devolves the care of the soldier who, through wounds or sickness, falls out of the line of battle or of march.

In wars in barbarous and tropical countries it is sometimes essential that the wounded should be attended to at once; otherwise they may be mutilated by the enemy, or the sun and atmosphere may have a fatal effect upon not necessarily dangerous hurts. The fact that usually a savage army is not equipped with very far-ranging weapons will give the bearers a chance to pick up any wounded the firing line has left behind. Comparatively rarely will the spears and projectiles from old-fashioned weapons rain down over the heads of the advancing troops, who with their modern rifles may be ex-

pected to drive the mass of the foe at a long distance before them.

But a battle between two evenly-matched civilized powers will present tremendous difficulties to the sanitary service in the field. Indeed, Mr. Archibald Forbes, who has perhaps seen more of "great war" than any man alive, has expressed his conviction that soldiers wounded in the firing line must lie on the field untended till the fight is over. To order a bearer party to perform their functions on any part of the field where the enemy is sowing his leaden seed would be to condemn them to death. There can be no doubt that there are many heroic officers and men of the ambulance corps who would be only too willing to risk their lives out of charity towards the poor hurt fellows under fire, but admirable as is this spirit of self-sacrifice it would be easy to allow it to imperil the efficiency of the whole body, and in the end the wounded would be far worse off through the hypergenerosity of the physicians in sacrificing themselves to little purpose. It is better that half a dozen men should bleed to death at once for want of a deft

hand to fasten a ligature, than that twenty should rot slowly away while the places of the doctors dead on the field of honour awaited their successors.

The modern battle line advances very slowly; a man hit before noon may not unlikely have to wait till sunset before it would be reasonably safe for the ambulance men to come to his assistance; if he is one of the losing party he may have to be left altogether at the mercy of his foes; and, however amiable their intentions, it is very doubtful if their doctors will be far enough afield to care for him within twenty-four hours. It may be taken as an axiom of war: the better the fighters, the worse for the wounded.

This difficulty of administering first aid to the wounded early enough to be effective has, for a long time, been so thoroughly recognised that already, for several years, attempts have been made to teach the soldier how to help himself. In the Prussian army, for example, each man is provided with the Esmarch bandage, so called from its designer, a celebrated military surgeon. This

bandage, which is triangular in shape, has printed on it various illustrations of the manner in which it may be used. The following remarks on it I quote from Surgeon Pilcher, of the United States Army: "The uses of the triangular bandage are almost endless. When laid upon the head, folded and turned, it forms an excellent cap. In a similar way, it may be formed into a mitten for the hand or a sock for the foot. Indeed the latter use was at one time so prevalent among the German soldiers that the packet had to be stitched tightly into their clothing in order to prevent their opening it and using the bandage for foot wear. Rolled up into a strip, it forms a ribbon which may be bound around an injured part. Single and folded, wounds of the body and extremities are excellently bandaged by it. Spread out, with its points tied about the neck, it forms the best possible sling for an injured arm. Tightly twisted about a limb above a bleeding wound, it serves excellently to hold the hemorrhage in check until a surgeon can apply more permanent means. Rolled into a ring, it forms a seat upon which an injured

man may be carried; and two of them bound about two short rods, held a foot apart, form an excellent bearing seat."

The private soldier of almost every civilized nation is now supplied with some such rough and ready means of attending to his own hurts so far as to mitigate immediate danger. If he is not able to crawl away by himself, he is safer lying still on the ground than if he were exposed to the enemy's fire by being lifted into the arms of two other men. As soon as the advance of the battle line leaves the ground safer, his regimental doctors put his bandages into shape to allow him being carried to the nearest ambulance or "collecting station"; thence he is brought in the wagon or on a pack animal to the dressing station, which is, or should be, out of the reach of the dangerous fire.

So far he must travel, if he is to be dealt with at all; but here, if his wound calls for immediate operation, it can be treated; otherwise, after making him as comfortable as possible, he is passed on by another ambulance, or, it may be, by railway, to the field-hospital. This must be well out of danger

from the enemy, unless in the event of absolute and unavoidable defeat.

Here, if it is not too crowded, he may be allowed to remain for a few days; to recover if his wound be slight, and return thence to the front: if serious, to rest and gain strength for his journey to the rear. And, behind this, should the distance to the military base be considerable, there will be the various "Hospitals on the Line of Communication."

To pursue further this by-path of the art of war does not enter into my scheme; but a few words on the essential difference between the casualties of ancient and modern war may not be out of place.

Modern war is less deadly than ancient war, modern battle is more deadly than ancient battle. This is no paradox. In the old wars the sick and wounded of an army were never heard of again; their own side abandoned them, the enemy slew them in cold blood. Such a thing happened more than once to our own wounded in the last North-Western Campaign; but that was an exceptional case of savage strife by no means

typical of war in general. The Russo-Turkish Campaign of 1877 cannot be called remarkable for the delicacy of feeling with which it was carried on; but over and over again the Russian doctors extended the same care to the Turkish wounded as to their own, and the Turkish medical service did not entirely ignore the claim of the Russians. In the old days the waste of war was out of all proportion to the number slain in fighting, in modern war there is some equality between the two.

If two ancient warriors were placed face to face with swords in their hands, it was certain that one would kill the other; for if one feared, he would turn to fly, and the other smite him from behind. If two modern soldiers were turned into a field with rifles in their hands, after exchanging a shot or two the poorer marksman would almost certainly surrender to the other. This, say some, would go to prove that battle is less deadly than it was. It does nothing of the kind; it merely shows that the business instinct of civilization enters even into the evasion of death. The ancient coward said

to himself, "He will certainly kill me with his sword if I stop; I may just possibly escape him if I run." The modern and more intelligent coward reflects: "With his rifle he can kill me whichever way I go; but if I submit to him, I can save my life." So the frightened wolf flies from the hunter, but the frightened hound fawns on his master.

Yes; when the Roman legion met the Greek phalanx many a good man was slain outright, and many more died whose wounds the dullest army doctor of to-day might have saved; but could half a dozen batteries of artillery have been let loose for five minutes within a mile of the phalanx, there would not have been one man in a hundred whom all the king's horses and all the king's men could have put together again. Nay, a brigade of magazine rifle-armed infantry could grind it to powder before it could advance a thousand yards.

That is where the deadliness of modern war comes in: the suddenness with which utter destruction may overwhelm everything standing within a widely drawn circumference. The Greeks and the Romans knew

what it was to give or take mortal hurts when struggling body to body; but they never saw legion, nor century, nor even maniple smitten into the bleeding, smoking earth at one blow from an enemy scarcely visible.

To be smitten by the harness-ringing steel was one thing; to be blasted by a pinch of buzzing powder behind a ball is another. In the old wars men looked on other men and slew them; in modern war enemies who do not see each other call each on a third party to decide between them by slaying the other. Whoever spends the more money on the third party, serves him better and is more patient under his buffetings, wins his favours and the day. This third party is the Prince of High-Explosives.

## CHAPTER XI

# A Battle of the Future

THE boots of Marshal Hannibal are hurting him. The Marshal is seated in the largest ground floor room on the enemy's side of the frontier of Marshal Hannibal's country. In front of Marshal Hannibal is a big kitchen table on which lies a large scale map of that part of the world, with some thirty to forty mixed black and white-headed pins stuck in it. Each of these pins represents, or did represent when the fighting commenced a week ago, thirty thousand men. There are more white pins than black on the chart, and there is a marked interval between two of the black pins and their fellows, while opposite this interval are marshalled the preponderance of white.

A couple of field telegraph wagons stand

in the roadway, their unhitched cattle browsing a few feet away. The wires are run into the inn chamber, and two military operators are busy at the Marshal's elbow despatching and receiving messages. There are also staff officers clerically or otherwise employed in this room and the anteroom, and outside orderlies on horseback and on bicycles are ever coming and going.

A telegraphic message is received from a corps commander; the Marshal smiles and moves one of the white pins slap into the interval between the two black pins and the main body.

Some hours pass, and a wire comes that the main strength of the enemy threatens to outflank his left. He scowls, moves the pins as the wire suggests, curses his boots, and telegraphs several orders.

He then calls for food. They bring him stale bread and staler sausages; he devours them heartily, uncomplainingly.

Night falls; he thinks of taking off his boots; he hasn't been in bed for ten days; he nods in his chair.

They wake him; the wire has been cut

between headquarters and the Seventh Corps. The Marshal empties a cup of cold water on his head, and while an aide-de-camp sops up the mess, looks at his map by the light of a candle. The Seventh Corps is the one he flung into the breach in the enemy's line. Is it cut off altogether?

Wire after wire flashes along to the other corps. No one seems to know anything; the night is dark, nothing can be seen of the Seventh Corps, touch has been lost with it; but the two hostile corps which the Seventh makes head to still seem to occupy the same position, and although, probably because of the darkness, no artillery are in action, there is at times a glimmer of musketry fire.

Minutes lengthen into hours, and the Marshal feels his boots gripping tighter on his numbed feet just as perhaps the enemy are squashing his Seventh Corps. He wires to the other corps commanders in that part of the field to close in at dawn upon the isolated portion of the enemy and crush it, even at the risk of finding themselves detached.

At last day breaks, and an hour after sunrise communication with the Seventh Corps is re-established; they have been hard pressed, and have lost enormously; one division has fired away all its ammunition and has had a battalion annihilated; but aided by the dark night, the rest have held on somehow with the bayonet. Supplies have turned up, and the worst is over.

By noon comes the report that one of the army corps severed from the enemy has been forced into a river and compelled to surrender, whilst the other has scampered with the loss of the greater part of its artillery and all the wounded.

Two hours later the report is confirmed, and the enemy's losses stated at eight thousand killed and wounded and twenty thousand prisoners, with close on three score guns, etc.

Late in the afternoon comes the news that the enemy's attempt to outflank the left has been abandoned, and by nightfall the enemy is reported retiring all along their line, seemingly towards their fortifications.

Then Marshal Prince Hannibal telephones to the cavalry of the reserve to be on their

track, and he places the black pins an inch backward on his map, all but one, which he drops into his pin box.

Then he pulls off his boots, lights a cigar, and proceeds to dictate to several secretaries the earliest, and probably the least accurate, account of how he has won the first great battle of the Future War.

General Cæsar is the Commander of the Seventh Corps; in touch with the enemy almost from the first shot, he has just received an order to abandon his train, and relying only on the emergency ration for each man, fling himself into the gap between the enemy's main body and two of their army corps, the leaders of which have allowed themselves to be outmanœuvred, although they have battled so far with valour and success. The division of General Cæsar—that nearest to the enemy—has been constantly in action, although at long range, and he would like to put it in connection with the corps ammunition reserve before marching, but this would take a longer time than his instructions permit, and he finds himself compelled to trust to their husband-

ing their resources, or at worst looking to the contiguous troops to keep them supplied.

As the corps break ground, the division that is short of ammunition, being in front, will have a good deal to do, but once the ordered position is taken up the brunt of battle will fall upon the flanks. His corps cavalry being away under direct control of the Commander-in-Chief, he sends forward his three divisional squadrons, which for the past forty-eight hours have been withdrawn to ease the horses after the first long march of the campaign, and he orders them when clear of the columns to open out like a fan, and push on until they have precisely located the limits of the enemy's main and detached bodies. That done they are not to retire, but merely to send back word. Even if attacked they must stand fast or manœuvre with a boldness that will make them seem to the enemy the foremost troops of a strong cavalry advance guard. Each squadron is still to cover, as far as possible, its own division, but at the same time the three must act in unison if necessary. Two batteries of

horse artillery will move in rear of the centre squadron, with authority to come into action on whichever flank seems most threatened, but not to unmask unless the enemy is clearly advancing, and having once unmasked, to hold their ground even at the cost of destruction or capture. "It is better," General Cæsar observes in his directions, "that your valuable services should be lost than that you should be seen to retire."

The squadrons trot off at a speed of eight miles an hour, the horse batteries pursue not quite so fast, and the infantry divisions, moving by three generally parallel routes, the middle one of which is also taken by the field artillery, follow them at about four miles an hour. A battalion from each division covers the march, and the corps rifle battalion, pushed ahead of all the other foot, toils in open order after the horse artillery.

Presently gallopers from the left and right squadrons severally report that the main body of the enemy seems to be moving on its own right, and therefore away from the Seventh Corps, but that a force of cavalry computed at about twenty squadrons is

approaching from the supposed direction of the two detached army corps.

General Cæsar is well pleased. The position is clearly this: the enemy not realizing the proximity of his corps, is taking ground to the right (probably with the intention of outflanking the left wing of the invading army) in spite of the fact that their own safety is jeopardized by the lesion in their battle line. It is true that the detached corps awakening to the danger are hastening to close the hole, but he is on the spot as well as they, and if his troops can make head to twice their numbers until the corps behind him close round, the enemy's left wing is not merely cut off but smashed.

"Where are the guns?" he asks an orderly, and the pieces themselves answer with six sharp growls far away on his right. They are in action with the enemy's advancing cavalry.

General Cæsar sends an order that all arms shall incline to the right, save only a troop of the left squadron, which must keep its eye on the enemy's main body. The business of his army corps now is to keep

the enemy's left wing from coming another mile towards their main body.

The distant rattle from the horse batteries abruptly ceases; in twenty minutes an artillery subaltern on a horse is seen galloping across the fields, his sword arm hangs loose and bloody in his tunic sleeve, but he smiles gaily as he dashes past the staring battalions to the Head-quarter Staff. As he reins his charger six paces from General Cæsar, he topples out of the saddle, but picking himself instantly up, salutes.

"The enemy's cavalry, sir, charged us front and flank. We smashed 'em in front, but four squadrons burst in behind, cut the limber horses' throats and sabred our men, except a few. We did our best."

"The guns are gone?"

"The guns are gone, sir . . . for what they were worth."

"Are you all that's left?"

"Left unwounded, sir."

"What d'ye call that?" asks the general, pointing to the dripping arm.

"Nothing, sir," replies the artillery subaltern.

"You'd better take it to the doctor, anyhow," observes General Cæsar, and "What's your name?" he asks.

"Xenophon, sir, lieutenant, Z Battery 10th Brigade Horse Artillery."

"Thank you, Captain Xenophon," says General Cæsar, and that young gentleman, very pleased with the upshot of his bloody experience, disappears from the history of the campaign.

Disordered groups of the advanced squadrons come flying in; they have been ridden over by the hostile masses who, however, have not troubled to pursue, but continue to move in the direction of the main body.

General Cæsar reflects that the enemy is not such a fool as he looks, and so far his plans seem only to have led to slaughter; but he knows that it is too late to change them now, and he thinks of the phrase he has just heard: "gone for what they were worth."

He turns to his staff: "The right and left divisions must step out; let the centre division clear the road to let the field batteries get to the front, and come into action where they can, but refusing their flanks. Officers

to tell their men that if they do as well as the horse-gunners I shall be satisfied."

The artillery chief looks a little blank at this order, for he knows, if his subordinates do not, what has happened to the horse batteries. But the command is honourable if arduous, and off he himself goes with it. The remnant of the cavalry is given him as an escort.

Ere very long the field guns, three score of them, in noisy choir are flinging their bolts across the path the hostile army corps must adventure on.

The artillery chief reports that the enemy's cavalry have fallen back with considerable loss and in some confusion, but that he expects every moment a general attack.

At this instant General Cæsar's attention is drawn to a high cloud of dust sweeping towards his right rear. Its height suggests mounted troops, and its direction the enemy, but he cannot imagine what cavalry they can be, since the twenty squadrons engaged on his front must have represented the bulk of the horse of the two army corps against which he is operating.

He dare run no risks, however, so a brigade from the right division is taken off the road and extended to the right flank and rear. The left division being ordered to move to the right at the first practicable cross road. At the same time he wires to the commander of the army corps next in rear that he must rely upon him for the protection of his left flank.

Meanwhile the thunder of artillery grows and grows, and General Cæsar realises that the enemy, not caring to further expose their flank in an attempt to join their fellows, have turned on his advance guard and threaten to overmaster it.

The battle is approaching its crisis. The chief of the advanced guard reports that the enemy have developed a far superior artillery, that many of the batteries have more guns silent than working, and that, although a few battalions have arrived, it would be impossible to stand up for long to the infantry assault which the enemy's guns are now preparing.

General Cæsar's answer is, "Hold on tight." He orders the infantry advance to be pressed

on, and he feels sick with fear lest his field guns shall go the way of the horse.

But joy comes upon his right: a mounted patrol signals that the approaching horsemen are his own corps cavalry returned to him by the Commander-in-Chief in the very nick of time. Cæsar's smartest aide-de-camp spurs out to meet them. He brings this order:

"Advance to support guns in such and such direction, wheeling by their right flank ride over everything that walks the earth. If you fail to report, I'll give you credit for your duty."

Cæsar sees the squadrons incline towards the threatened point, and he bids the panting infantry waste just one breath on a cheer as they go by.

The pageant of horse has barely swept on to write their page of history, when the wounded infantry and gunners commence to dribble down from the fight. They are all despondent, and the Headquarter Staff sends out an officer to order the military police patrolling the line of march to hurry them on to the rear and arrest any one who has

quitted the front without reasonable cause.

General Cæsar dispatches his Chief of Staff in advance to discover the precise condition of affairs.

After a long while he comes back; the cavalry division burst into the enemy's infantry within five hundred yards of the batteries. They smashed the attack absolutely, but, getting out of hand, were finally charged and broken by the enemy's horse, which however did not venture another attempt on the guns.

The artillery has been sorely battered and has lost a quarter of its strength in men and material, but for the most part is still in action. The enemy's artillery after a terrific cannonade has slackened fire, probably through shortness of ammunition: they are preparing a further infantry attack, but somewhat feebly, their men seeming demoralized by the cavalry action. The leader of General Cæsar's horse is missing, and his artillery chief, though not *hors de combat*, badly hurt by a splinter.

All General Cæsar's regiments have left the high roads now to the wounded and

supply wagons, and are moving into position through the fields.

As the Headquarter Staff tops the crest of a hill, General Cæsar sees an infantry column half a mile below lit up by a burst of flame; there is an ebullient crackle, and the column is broken as though struck by the fist of a giant.

It is only a loose shrapnel shell that has by accident found a billet; but General Cæsar is too old a soldier to risk his life so early in the day, and he halts the Headquarter Staff on the hill, sending forth a few officers to keep him in touch with the front.

As the sun sets the enemy develops a second attack, but it is not pressed by so many troops as in the morning, and meeting with a firm resistance, is virtually abandoned when the night falls darkly on the field.

All night the pickets spit at each other along the line, but General Cæsar dozes in his cloak until he is wakened by the report of a cavalry scout that he has heard a movement of troops far to the left rear and been challenged by a vedette in a language which he failed to understand.




"CAVALRY SCOUTS CHALLENGED IN AN UNKNOWN TONGUE" . .

The circumstance is peculiar, but General Cæsar comes to the conclusion that the man has deceived himself as to the direction in which the troops were encountered and also about the challenge. To make sure the general telegraphs back to the following corps, but without result—the wire has been cut.

Evidently the enemy, or at least a part of their hussars, have worked round his position under cover of the darkness. In all probability these hussars must be fresh troops arrived from another army corps, and General Cæsar contemplates the prospect of being hemmed in between three or more forces each equal to his own.

This would never do; so General Cæsar orders the second division, which after the manœuvres of the day now forms the rear-guard, to fall back and push out battalions and companies till it either comes in contact with the enemy or re-establishes connection with the next corps.

Two hours after this order is given a furious rattle of musketry splutters up from the rear, and then gradually diminishes.

General Cæsar, at first mightily relieved to hear it subside, suddenly recollects that it is his second division, the one now engaged, which is short of ammunition, and he is overcome by the thought that it is their musketry which is being overborne. He orders all spare supplies to be sent back to them; but the wagons go rolling all over the roads and fields and into the ditches in the darkness, and he knows they can hardly be in time.

But day dawns at last, and the general is beside himself with joy to have the news that his rearguard is holding on still, the attack on it having been a furious but futile onslaught by one of the enemy's divisions which had lost its way in the darkness.

In front of him, General Cæsar, making a personal reconnoissance, observes that the ememy has thrown up earthworks during the night, but has shouldered off a great part of his troops as though to face fresh adversaries. These fresh adversaries, as General Cæsar soon learns and we already know, are the corps sent by the Commander-in-Chief at dawn to the support of the long suffering Seventh Corps.

The battle is over but for the pounding requisite to temper surrender with self-respect, and General Cæsar with the Seventh Corps will find an honourable place in the Gazette of Victory.

## CHAPTER XII

# A Battle of the Future

*(Continued)*

PRIVATE SCIPIO is No. 980 in the third battalion of the regiment of the Duke of Carthage. His battalion is the fourth of the first brigade of the third division of the Seventh Army Corps, and he is one of the 700 effective left of the 1,050 of that battalion who entrained at Persepolis ten days ago. So far his brigade have not laid eyes on the enemy, although they have lost a few killed and several wounded by rifle bullets coming unannounced from no visible foe. The decrease in their number has been mainly due to sunstrokes and enteric complaints causing deaths, or, in the greater number of cases, men falling out sick or lame on the line of

march. A few men have deserted and a few more been handed over to the military police for misconduct. A reserve man has committed suicide after blowing out the brains of a non-commissioned officer, and another, who could have prevented the crime, but with intent refrained from doing so, has been shot.

As yet Private Scipio is inclined to vote campaigning a mighty poor trade. There was plenty of spirit-stirring pomp and circumstance about the departure from Persepolis, but once the train had puffed out of the station he experienced nothing more than discomfort. To begin with, to sit cramped up with a baker's dozen of other men, all armed and accoutred, in an old-fashioned, badly springed railway carriage, while the engine attached to it covered three hundred miles at a pace never exceeding twelve miles an hour, and chequered every few furlongs by a standstill, was a tiresome and heart-sinking business. When the limb-stiffened regiment detrained on the frontier line forty hours after their departure from Persepolis, all were weary-eyed, dusty, and

sallow-visaged, and the elder men's faces covered with faintly defined beards.

The battalion was paraded for inspection by the regimental chief, then dismissed to feed, and, still more urgent business, as their medical officers through the medium of the company commanders reminded them, to wash. After that they were inspected again, this time by their brigadier, and the next morning by the divisional leader. A few men had already succumbed, and been weeded out when they had the order to march.

Since then they have been footing it continually, seven days at an average of twenty miles a day, marching and counter-marching, hither and thither, till the small sense of locality Private Scipio ever possessed has been hopelessly confused.

It seems to Private Scipio that he has spent the greater part of his quarter century life in trudging up and down a sandy road, carrying a ponderous weight under a burning sun. This may be war for the people over there in the vague distance where the noise is, but for him it seems like tramping

an eternal sentry-go in heavy marching order.

He had an impression that an army was a mixed force of infantry, cavalry, artillery, and engineers; but the only horses he has seen since he left home were those of his own officers, an hussar orderly or two, and the regimental carts; the only guns were those peeping out of a train, which they were shunted to let pass on the railway; and the only engineers a section in charge of a pontoon bridge, which they crossed two days ago.

One day Private Scipio learns that the artillery belonging to his army corps are moving on a parallel road five roods to the right, and that the bulk of the cavalry are busy half a dozen leagues ahead of the foremost infantry patrol.

The next he hears that the said cavalry have had a brush with the enemy's squadrons; and evidence of the fact comes down the road in the shape of a laden ambulance cart, and soon after three disarmed men in strange uniforms escorted by a sergeant of dragoons and four troopers, carbine-heel to

hip. The sergeant is mighty proud of his prize, in spite of the chaff showered on him by the infantry. Later on in the war a single corporal and file will be considered sufficient for the charge he now shares with his four sabres.

The laughter dies away as a fragor of massed batteries shakes the very earth the troops are treading, with a boom and bellow suggesting the noises of Armageddon.

At last Private Scipio knows he is marching on the cannon thunder. His feet smite the ground more crisply, his heart beats higher a moment, then it falls again to his boots, as he sees by the roadside great swarms of bluebottle flies buzzing round a mass of flesh, so shapeless that only the four iron shoes proclaim it to have been a horse.

But there are two ways of looking at everything. "See, boys, that's what the enemy's guns have done since Monday week," says a colour-sergeant, who knows his business. And the joke goes round that the wretched animal lying crushed to pulp by the roadside is the most serious casualty up to date. But this humour, too, becomes

sadly unprofitable when a long train of wounded comes down the road from the front. And not cavalry this time, but men of their own division; for the first brigade has reached the scene of conflict miles ahead.

Nevertheless, Private Scipio's regiment is not getting to the front to-day. They are drawn into the side of the road, and halted with ordered arms, while a brigade of heavy cavalry, lancers and dragoons, in fours, trot sharply by in a column of blinding, choking dust. As troop succeeds troop, Private Scipio notices the ranks become worse and worse dressed from head of column to tail, and that most of the cattle are in a lather. These squadrons have made thirty miles since morning, and will decide the fate of an army before night.

As Private Scipio's regiment continues its advance, the battle noises seem to recede, and there is no overtaking them. The sun is yet above the horizon when the brigade is ordered to bivouac.

Private Scipio has eaten a biscuit and is dropping off to sleep, when his heavy eyes

suggest to him that a mound of newly turned clay a few yards away looks as if it might contain beetroot. He saunters over to it and suddenly finds himself reading a pencilled inscription on a luggage label tied round a cross formed from two broken gun barrels: "Here lie six men of the Princess of Troy's regiment, surprised and cut to pieces by the enemy's cavalry while on picket duty about this spot"—yesterday!

As Private Scipio slinks back to his resting-place he thinks he shall sleep no more, but Nature is as generous to him as to "the man that's got to swing," and the next thing of which Private Scipio becomes aware is the company buglers blowing reveillé. It is three o'clock in the morning, and a glorious autumn day is dawning on the marshalled host.

Private Scipio has had an honest night's rest save for an ugly dream to the effect of his being the mark of the converging fire of batteries discharging horsemen from the four corners of the world. He turns his back to the mound while he feeds, and soon feels himself a man again.

As the companies fall in, the cannonade, which recommenced at dawn, grows louder, and after half an hour on the road, the order comes to take to the fields. Presently the brigade is moving across country in line of battalion columns at deploying interval. A staff officer is met who gives the brigadier a direction to the right of that so far followed, and Private Scipio passes close to a village from every other house of which the red Swiss cross is flying.

A little out from this the proximity of a pitched battle becomes patent. Dead bodies lie scattered here and there; they are infantry men of Private Scipio's army corps who have retired disabled from the firing line, and collapsed on their way to the rear. One living man sits on the ground raving with thirst. His water bottle is full, but he has been shot laterally through the body, and both arms are shattered.

A subaltern doubles over to him, unscrews his bottle stopper and puts it between his teeth; then doubles back again.

Private Scipio sees a dark globe mount upwards in the distant sky: it is a captive

balloon ascending from the enemy's position.

"So they're trying to escape us that way!" says that witty fellow, Scipio's colour-sergeant, and the shot-riven maniac fades out of the picture.

None of the rank and file has any knowledge of the results of the previous day's fighting, but now the terrain strewn with broken wheels, wrecked caissons, shattered rifles, empty cartridge cases, and the mechanical debris of war, to say nothing of the heaped and ghastly dead, show that their line has pressed forward from its first position.

The cannon thunder which has heretofore been chiefly on the right now rolls in stormy waves across their direct front. A galloper approaches the brigadier at full speed, and immediately comes the unwonted command, "Step out!"

The haversacks swing to the extended paces and the columns go gaily on. Private Scipio sees a long way in front dark masses of infantry standing motionless under the sun. They disappear, and they rise again.

There is a flash and a rasp close to him; a shrapnel bursts harmlessly in the right interval, a second follows with a like result, a third pursues with a crash, almost splitting Scipio's ears, and a few files in front of him a mounted officer and many men go down.

For the sixtieth part of a second Private Scipio is convinced that he is three parts in eternity. Then he hears a voice crying, "Don't deploy, men, they're not firing at us." And things go on very much as before, save that the column makes a wheel to avoid something none but a surgeon and a bearer party venture to look upon.

Paradoxical as the statement he has just heard seems to Private Scipio, there is truth in it; for no further shells come their way for another twenty minutes.

Endless columns of infantry are winding into sight from all directions but one. In that the troops are moving away towards the enemy.

The escort of the divisional staff canter by with a gay flutter of lance pennons; Private Scipio thinks he can catch the jingle of scabbard against spur, and the gentle

beat of hoofs on turf in spite of the cannons' roar. A galloper detaches himself from the group and approaches the battalion leader: "The general expects a great deal from the Duke of Carthage's regiment."

The chief smiles: "Pass the word that the general expects a great deal from the Duke of Carthage's."

Private Scipio feels that the success of the campaign rests upon him alone.

In front now he sees the main strength of the corps artillery; a double row of limbers first, then twenty yards in front a double row of guns extending as far as the eye can reach to the right, and supported on the left by riflemen, lying down but not engaged; an interval of a few yards between each battery to allow for the passage of their own or other arms.

Shrapnel shells are constantly bursting in white puffs about the battery, but the casualties are infrequent, and Scipio only notices two guns idle; one of them is lying a complete wreck on the dead bodies of its servants.

An officer, in a hoarse voice, calls out some

directions and explanations, the burden of which Private Scipio fails to catch. The regiment is marched past the left flank of the batteries, and through the ranks lying down, and on for another four hundred yards into a growing storm of shell-bursts, before a great hole rent in the middle of the column forbids longer delay about deployment. There is no powder smoke save from the exploding shells, but the clouds of dust raised at every concussion by the guns produce a very similar effect on the vision of Private Scipio, and he can no longer see what is happening on either side. His officers have dismounted, but remain standing or walking about, while the men are ordered to lie down. His captain repeats part of the instructions he has already heard, but again the point is lost, only he learns that there is no going back now.

His heart quakes continually as the shells go splashing overhead, nevertheless he feels a mild surprise that so very little harm comes of it all.

He is in the front rank of his company; two hundred yards away there is a hedge

and a thick line of men firing through it. Presently, their pioneers leading, they go through it and disappear. Not all of them, though—many lie still upon the ground. The first line of Scipio's battalion is ordered to follow; they rise, advance swiftly but steadily across the open, and halt again at the hedge. The men they find lying there are dead and wounded; they have fallen not by artillery, but long-range infantry fire, and so now fall many of Scipio's comrades.

The enemy have clearly made a mark of the hedge, so the order is given to pass through it and lie down twenty yards to the other side. There is a faint yelp of dismay as this order is obeyed, for the mere standing up costs several losses; but in the more advanced position they are comparatively safe. The firing line is a long furlong in front, and between it and the hedge few projectiles, great or little, are directed.

Soon, however, their presence is detected, and the shrapnel again showers its dread contents over them, while the rifle bullets whistle and sing. The officers keep them moving onward, in little, short rushes taken



A FORLORN HOPE—
A DASH FOR THE
TELEGRAPH WIRES
SUCCESS AND DEATH

with the body bent from the hips and the head ducked forward in human but unheroic attitude.

The man on Scipio's right throws up his hands, with a howl, and plumps on his face. It is Metellus, his old schoolfellow, brother of blue-eyed Fabia, whom Scipio loves and who has confided Metellus to him. Scipio forgets alike his danger and his duty and turns aside—only to be swung back into line by the colour-sergeant, who with his left hand on his collar and his rifle butt against the small of his back, bellows in his ear, "Business first."

After that Private Scipio's head begins to buzz, and his chief impression of the battle is that he has the deep sea in front of him and the devil behind, a succinct but accurate view of the real state of affairs.

Most of his neighbours now are men of a different section of his company, and when at last he finds himself in the centre of a group at the firing line there are not three men near him whom he knows by sight.

He throws himself to earth with the rest, but he is hardly down before the whole line

rises and sweeps forward another fifty yards, leaving behind it a bloody spoor of dead and dying.

Private Scipio has not put in a shot yet, but now he hears a subaltern calling, "At such and such a mark, try six hundred, volleys only."

Private Scipio cannot see the target to which the subaltern refers, but he adjusts his sight to the commanded range and blazes away with the rest. Meanwhile the subaltern keeps walking up and down behind repeating, "Steady, men of the Duke of Carthage's Regiment, volleys only. Steady, men of the Duke of Carthage's Regiment, volleys——" he stops abruptly, but another officer takes up the phrase and keeps on singing it out until he too is shot and a sergeant-major takes his place.

After this the advance is continued by little knots of men bolting forward from time to time at the sound of a whistle whenever the leaden hail in front slackens for an instant.

Now for the first time Private Scipio perceives the enemy's rifle pits some few hundred

yards away. Between him and them, and around him on all sides fly their bullets seemingly as thick as rain. Stricken men are sobbing and squealing on either side, but nothing touches him. First independent, and then magazine fire has been ordered, and Private Scipio opens his cut-off and spouts out his bullets as merrily as a sand-grig.

The man positively laughs with glee; for the mania of fighting has seized him and he thinks the God of Battles wills that he shall slay without risk to himself.

Suddenly some invisible body makes a flashing trail along his rifle barrel, and Private Scipio finds himself wanting his right thumb.

He drops his rifle and stares a moment with horror-stricken vision at his wounded limb. A gush of blood calls him to his senses, and with trembling fingers his left hand dives in his haversack in search of one of the pieces of lint he has heretofore regarded as so much in the way of more useful things.

In his anxiety to deal with his wound he

momentarily ignores the risk to his life, and while bullets whiz perilously near his brain, squats down on the ground to tie it up, using his teeth to draw the knot.

His bandage fastened, he thinks he is fairly justified in withdrawing from the firing line and making the best of his way to the nearest field hospital. But a glance in that direction shows that such a proceeding would be sheer madness; for exposed as is his present position, it is secure compared with the ground half a mile in the rear, where come struggling on the loose clouds of skirmishers covering the grand attack. Every gun and rifle the enemy possess seem to be busy tearing them asunder, and groups fade away into nothingness as soon as they reach a certain point.

Private Scipio trembles for his country; he is convinced that the onslaught must founder in this whirling mäelstrom of projectiles.

But the last word is not yet spoken; there is a frantic outburst from forty cannon somewhere in the thick of the oncoming line—and that line surges forward again.

Artillery faces artillery at short rifle range,

and their voices rive the canopy of heaven. The thunder of battle is outvied by the thunder of the elements, as if the very gods were eager to join again in human quarrel.

Private Scipio feels he has just time to get out of the way before the advancing host can trample over him, so he creeps into a ditch to await developments.

On comes the attack, wave after wave, the leading sections firing from the hip. They are checked again, or rather melt away in the spouting seas of lead, but again their guns come jolting over the corpse-carpeted ground to give them one push more.

The fire of the defence slackens, the assailants push on with the bayonet to lay the last straw on the camel's back.

In ten minutes the cheers of his fellows tell Private Scipio that the position is won and the enemy in full retreat.

Then Private Scipio crawls out of his ditch again and, his rifle sloped on his left shoulder, goes to look for a doctor.

He was not fashioned in a Titan's mould, but he has done his duty. And, observes Captain May, of the Prussian army, in his

*Tactical Retrospect on the War of* 1866, "If only all soldiers of their own accord would simply do their duty in battle, an army would be perfectly invincible."

THE END

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